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WHAT I HAVE GATHERED

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE WOOD END

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VOICES

A LITTLE GREEN WORLD

THE PILGRIMAGE OF A FOOL

DOWN YOUR STREET

LOVE IN A LITTLE TOWN

A BACHELOR'S COMEDY

BECAUSE OF JANE

THE GREY SHEPHERD

SPRAY ON THE WINDOWS

THE GOSSIP SHOP

THE SILENT LEGION

ETC.

WHAT I HAVE GATHERED

By J. E. BUCKROSE

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*GOOD luck travel with my Book,
So that you who in it look,
Though you find there nothing new,
May be glad it came to you.*

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WHAT I HAVE GATHERED

A

DEVAPRASAD BHATTACHARYYA.

PROPOSALS.

It has often been said that at every woman receives one proposal of marriage. But if you should come across any girl over thirty who owns without embroidery that she has *not* done so, then attach her to your soul with hooks of steel—if you can—for she is one of those rare human beings who speak the truth even to themselves.

Otherwise she would have, stored somewhere in the back of her mind and kept from the moth by memory's lavender, *the proposal that never happened*. For instance, it might have been when she met the object of her secret adoration on the cliff top that August evening, and said how bright the stars were; to which he replied—rendered vaguely sentimental for the moment by a good dinner and the lapping waves—that they shone less brightly than her eyes; then he pressed her hand in bidding her good-night, and after a while she became quite sure he would have proposed that evening, but—

There used to be a great many of these ‘*but*’ *proposals*, keeping middle-aged spinsters in little houses on village streets from growing bitter. You could see women looking out over neat hedges with flower scissors in their hands at the young couples going by, with a sort of calm, semi-regretful assurance that they too might have walked arm in arm like that, but—

Others, however, were soothed by this gradually

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deepening conviction that some trifling accident of circumstance had shut them out from marriage, and the obstacles they invented to soothe their hurt hearts were many ; their own lack of response being the most favoured, while the snake in the grass who had mysteriously maligned them came in a good second. And while this sort of thing is far less common now than formerly, it still exists.

Then, of course, there are many different varieties of the proposal which actually happens—though a man is less ready to ask a girl to marry him with no sort of encouragement whatever than some novelists would have us believe, for centuries of being the one to throw the handkerchief have made him vain, and he usually likes to have some sort of feeling that the handkerchief will be picked up—though he may find out his mistake afterwards.

Such a lover is very fond of the *proposal by implication*, and the following is the only example I know of at first hand, in spite of the fact that they are quite common and take place in all spheres of life. The girl was a small farmer's daughter, and she had an admirer who came to see her every Saturday night for a long, long time, but never got any 'forrader.' He was a silent youth—even for a Yorkshireman in a remote country place—and the girl's relations gradually became impatient at having to go out into the yard, or upstairs into chilly bedrooms, in order to make opportunities which were never taken. The weather grew colder and colder, and still he continued

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to sit there, staring at the fire and saying nothing. But at last one night about Christmas-time he roused himself and said, without removing his gaze. "Your firegrate is just like my mother's firegrate."

"Is it?" said she dilly—for she too was getting very tired of waiting.

"Do you reckon you could bake mince-pies on our grate same as you do on this grate?" he continued, continuing to look straight before him.

"I could try, lad," said she.

And so a marriage was arranged.

But the *kiss-first-and-ask-afterwards* proposal is the one most in favour, I fancy, at the present time; perhaps because it is, after all, the kind that has the finest glamour of youth about it. For there is no tiresome consideration of ways and means; no thought of possibly disapproving relations; just the girl—or the man—and a corner at a dance or a tennis party, and the thing is done. What happens afterwards is another question; but nothing worse, I think, than may possibly come of an interested, well-thought-out marriage.

A popular sort, particularly in certain ultra-modern circles, is the '*if only*' proposal. This is employed sometimes by young men who cannot afford to marry, but more often by those who don't want to do so, and the advantage to the latter lies in the fact that such a suitor can have his fun without paying for it. He can declare his love by telling the girl how he would delight to make her his bride—'if only' he

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could afford to marry. Occasionally he brings in a stern father or an unreasonable uncle to reinforce his disability.

But all this is far away from the thoughts of the lover who is really poor and really anxious to marry. He will not have half the assurance of the butterfly man, and may quite likely get elbowed aside by some one better off, or with more push, while he is trying to reach a position where he thinks it fair to the girl to ask her to share his hardships. This kind of proposal, when it finally does happen, has no name —like some other things that are sacred.

There is also the unusual variety which Bernard Shaw has obviously been unfortunate enough to come across rather often in his life—I mean the *driven-to-earth* proposal. Most people observe it only very occasionally and would prefer, if they are women, to look the other way; for when the hunted lover at last succumbs, he usually does it half-heartedly, and he may even come back next day to tell his promised bride that he has been thinking the matter over in the night, and has come to the conclusion he is not worthy of her—that last desperate bid for freedom. But though she may agree with him, she does not say so, and somehow manages to make him feel it was all his doing. Perhaps in time she believes this herself; and when she tells intimate friends that dear John took her by storm, she means what she says.

Another less agreeable sort is the *patronising*.

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proposal. It may come from a young, handsome man to a woman who has loved him for years; or from a very rich man to a girl without a penny; or from a mother's spoilt darling to a fine, gay creature whose boots he is not worthy to button; but it can very seldom lead to happiness, and those who receive such had usually better say "No," and be miserable for a time, than "Yes," and be miserable until they are divorced or dead.

The *poetical proposal* is one which very few of us know much about. But if the proposer really is a poet, and if poets do propose differently from other people, perhaps his words come forth like the notes of a blackbird in spring—that most ancient love-song known to the world. And perhaps the girl he loves will feel as if she were standing in an April wood carpeted with primroses in bud, all of them opening magically, softly, at one time—and yet so quietly that it seems quite natural. But this is only surmise.

The *proposal by letter* is a bleak affair, however burning the phrases in which it is written. Nobody can declare that nature intended man to declare his passion by means of diluted lamp-black and wood-pulp—unless it is those who happen never to have tried the other way. For if the suitor is accepted, he misses an exquisite moment which no power on earth can restore to him—the one when he reads his answer in her face; and if he is refused, he has only spared himself an unpleasant moment at too great a risk.

There is also the tribute sometimes received by

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middle-aged women who seem unattractive to the general public—I mean the '*When I grow up*' proposal. This has a morning freshness about it like the sound of a brook in the early spring-time, and I can recall one such from my own earliest memories. A little, curly-headed boy was standing by an elderly girl with long features who embroidered puppies and cornflowers on grey linen; and after a while he put his small grubby paw on her knee, saying earnestly: "I'm going to marry you when I grow up, Cousin Harriet." And she smiled down at him over her work, with something in her face that was so simple and kind that it must have reached me even then, for I remember thinking that Cousin Harriet was not a bit plain when she looked like that, and I wished vaguely that she would wear that expression always and make everybody love her.

The *recurring proposal*, is not so very common, but it does happen. I do not think that lovers who ask and are refused, and then keep on asking regularly about twice a year, can be the most passionate sort, but they are faithful, and they often get the girl in the end. In some few cases, however, they irritate the object of their affections past bearing, and I once heard of a young lady in the eighties who became so exasperated by this unwelcome fidelity that at last she threw the young gentleman's top-hat out of the window and recommended him to follow it; which finished the affair, because a much-respected citizen received the top-hat full in his spectacles, and our

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town—being a simple place then—rocked with laughter.

The *unspoken proposal* is, of all the most common, I believe; but the queer thing about it is that many people do not realise they have made use of it until somebody mentions the subject. Then they glance back over the history of their own courtship, and recall the odd fact that he never did propose at all, but that they found themselves engaged before the fateful question was ever asked or answered. It somehow happened.

The *proposal by proxy* is the most uninteresting of all, for the simple reason that the man who can go to his aunt or his friend or his sister, and crave assistance from her, may make an excellent husband, but can hardly be called a romantic lover. Either he has no faith in himself, or he has too much faith in the inducements to matrimony which an outsider can put before the lady more delicately than he is able to do in his own person. Any way, it is a dull, second-hand sort of arrangement, which no gay and ardent girl is likely to find acceptable.

In conclusion, there exists one golden rule which applies to every proposal on earth, and which should be graven deep in the heart of each girl as she grows old enough to be sought in marriage—namely, that it is as mean and unsporting for a woman to encourage a lover to propose, refuse him, and then to talk about it afterwards, as it is for a man to kiss and tell. Some women do not appear to think so—but perhaps they are of the sort that does not think at all.

GHOSTS

To avoid disappointment I had better make it quite clear from the start that this article is neither about the high-class ghost, which appears to the gentleman of the various psychological societies in Europe, nor about the low variety which—in village churchyards—scares little boys who ought to be in bed. It simply deals with a sort which you and I and everybody else have seen every day since we attained self-consciousness, and shall see every day until we die. No darkness: no moated grange nor tapestried room; no ‘properties’ whatever—but an eerie strangeness, all the same, because we do not know these ghosts *are* ghosts. We think they are real living people and—more disturbing still—we each think the creature we see is ourselves.

This sounds odd, but one example will show that it is only too true. Mrs Brown in the next street is at this moment turning from her mirror, preparatory to sallying forth for a morning’s shopping. But as she descends the stairs and emerges from her front gate—though she looks quite smug and calm and has no idea of it—she is all the time seeing a ghost; a figure which has no existence at all, anywhere, excepting in Mrs. Brown’s own imagination. It has accompanied her through her schooldays. She saw it when she went up to receive her prizes that last term with all the girls applauding, when she stood at the altar

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with Mr. Brown ; even when she wept at the grave of those she loved.

Now, as she goes down the street, she is, vaguely aware of herself as a woman of about five feet three—a little stouter than modern fashion dictates, perhaps, but endowed with a subtle something which makes her appear quite graceful and considerably taller than any other ladies of her own height. And this partly explains why, at a recent Municipal gathering, she spoke sharply to a short, stout, rather vulgar-looking little person whom she nearly ran into, in the crowd. For that individual was her own reflection in a long mirror, *not* transformed by her knowledge that it was herself. She no longer sees quite so well as she used to do, and the ghost for one confused second had failed to stand in front of the reality.

This, of course, sounds perhaps not quite unamusing. But a less funny aspect presents itself when you and I come up with a sort of jolt against the hard fact that we are just like Mrs. Brown in this respect—that there are two of each one of *us*. There is the woman, for example, whom I see when I think of myself—ever when I am only vaguely conscious of my own personality. A figure which I alone see, and nobody else in the world ever has, or ever can do.

Each man and woman is perfectly accompanied by this ghost from a period in life so early that memory does not go back to it. The little girl you and I remember as ourselves, never lived. She is a ghost.

It is a strange and not very agreeable thought,

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though it is true. But when we begin to look further into the matter, I think we shall find that this is another of those means by which life is equalised and made easier for human beings; otherwise the difference between Mrs. Brown, or myself, and the lovely creature who lives a few doors farther down, would be almost intolerable. Equally, the dignified and gracious personage whom Mrs. Brown and I each see, as ourselves, when we are pouring out tea for a few friends, is never visible at all to those friends —though she is a great comfort to Mrs. Brown and me.

And of course every person at the tea-table brings his or her ghost with them. So in a small gathering of eight persons, you get eight ghosts, which brings the number up to sixteen. And I have sometimes wondered if this invisible overcrowding were the reason why a tea-party nearly always seems to make a room a little airless. But I have come to the conclusion this is only fancy—because, of course, ghosts don't breathe.

There is an odd fascination in thinking how extraordinarily interesting it would be if only our ghosts did suddenly become visible—if the slim and elegant lady of Mrs. Green's imagination, for instance, could but appear for one moment beside the gawky though estimable Mrs. Green whom we all know and love. I *think*, in this case, I cou'd bear the amusement which my private ghost would provide for all the rest—though, after all, I am not sure that I should find the entertainment worth while.

The affair, however, is further complicated by the

GHOSTS

existence of a third Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Green—not the ones *they* see, or *I* see, but the real woman visible only to the eye of the Creator. Which brings the number of a tea-party of apparently eight persons to twenty-four—two shadowy figures standing behind each smiling, casual talker. And now the idea somehow ceases to be amusing and becomes vaguely—terrible! It is among the hidden things.

Sometimes men and women believe for a moment that they have seen themselves, as they are, in all their naked reality. But this is a mistake, because no human being has this power: and they only call up a nightmare illusion which is more false than the flattering vision which has accompanied them before.

It is the fear and agony of mind produced by the sight of that figure, with everything grotesquely out of focus, which has produced more suicides than any other cause in the world. Men and women cannot—and no wonder—endure the sudden appearance of this distorted creature whom they take to be themselves.

I cannot help thinking that the novels of some eager-minded writers who do sincerely try to put down the whole truth about one human being are partly to blame for this. Because, despite their passion for reality, they also are like all the rest of mankind. It is impossible for them to see that most mysterious thing. So they hurt their souls and ours by dwelling too exclusively on the painful side of human nature, feeling convinced that if they experience pain they must be touching reality.

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This is no more ignoble than the self-flagellations of hermits in the Middle Ages. It often arises, indeed, from an equally passionate desire for rightness. But it gives to some people a false idea of life.

I think the very great, such as Shakespeare, must have seen their conception of their neighbours *through* their conception of themselves : that the fire of their inspiration, shining through both together, has thrown upon the page beyond an image truer even than these writers intended, or could have been able to produce of set purpose. Parts are still blurred—left out—exaggerated, but here is something which we all recognise as the truth, and our souls leap responsive at being liberated for even so brief a second from the strange loneliness in which all human beings must walk from the cradle to the grave.

When Paul the Apostle said—" Then shall I know, even as also I am known," he knew that the tremendous serenity of being only one was among the highest promises of heaven. Only we cannot experience it while we are here in the world.

But when we do happen to think of this it makes us kinder to our neighbours ; because while we may still laugh a little at a fat, middle-aged married woman being as coy as at eighteen, we are also aware of that other figure whom she herself alone sees, and who can still do these things without seeming ridiculous. Equally, the married buck of over fifty, gay and generous, with a worn-out joke for every girl he meets, will be quite understandable when we realise that he

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sees somebody so entirely different from the gentle man with a button-hole whom we meet day after day. We shall be glad that he goes so gallantly through middle age with his head up and all flags flying.

And in these days we often come across the man and woman who see themselves honestly as the splendid rebels of the human family. They know that they may not be endowed with physical beauty or great intellect, but they feel somehow subtly above the ruck, simply because of their disinclination to keep those laws which are the safeguard of human society. A giant-phantom of themselves is so vividly present to their minds when they speak in public, for instance, that it sometimes seems to stand between the man and his audience and becomes almost visible.

Perhaps this accounts for the extraordinary way in which such men and women have been able to impose upon a world which has afterwards howled with fury at being duped. But this is a mistake, for their danger lies in their sincerity. They have a morbid passion for the creature of their imagination which they take to be themselves, and they are irresistibly impelled to act and speak in accordance with that dreadful hallucination.

How then, thus hampered with ghosts, shall human travellers find their way through this difficult life?

That is the great question. But there is a rather unfashionable guide-book in which the answer may still be found, I think, if it is read without coloured spectacles.

BED AS A REFUGE

I suppose there is hardly any one in the civilised world—particularly of those who do just a little more every day than they really have strength to perform—who has not at some time regarded bed as a refuge.

Even an Eskimo, huddled with his family circle in an airless room and surrounded by the darkness of an Arctic winter, must still feel in the night hours that sense of the agitated and fluttered soul gradually settling down to quiet—like a bird who has reached a safe tree-top after being chased by an enemy—which is common to us all.

Perhaps, indeed, such a man feels it quite as fully as he who lies on a housetop under an Eastern sky with the stars so still and clear in the deep blue above him, though this does seem as if it ought to be the place in which to experience best that wonderful sense of relaxing the constant, subconscious, bird-like glancing of our minds this way and that, which is our state all day long—our heritage from æons of dangerous living.

For this reason the most unimaginative can picture David of Israel lying on his bed while the peace of the night settled softly upon him, until at last he could say to himself: “I will both lay myself down in peace, *and sleep.*”

But is it not strange that he is the one poet who has—so far as I am aware—given bed its right place in the spiritual history of human beings? We all

BED AS A REFUGE

know from experience that most of the important conflicts of the soul are carried on there ; that nearly all the decisions affecting our whole existence are really taken during those hours, though we may not be quite aware of it at the time. And yet we are apt to miss this part of existence out of our calculations, as if it did not matter. You even hear talk of time wasted in bed, from persons who would consider they had done something definitely useful if they sat up and read an Encyclopædia.

It is in bed that we learn to bear the inevitable. We are learning this all the time while we lie with our face turned to the wall thinking we are doing nothing. And we wait until those silent hours to realise some great happiness, because we know nobody will be watching to see how we take it.

An aspect of the question more entirely feminine is conjured up by the words, 'Breakfast in bed,' which implies at once that the breakfaster is in the habit of rising early, and is simply lengthening by two or three hours her time of refuge before she must get up to face the usual swarm of little, gnat-like cares. For 'breakfast in bed' is not only a tray with a teapot—it is a sign of a freemasonry which exists between all women, high and low, in this country.

If a wife loses her husband, or a mother her child, or a girl is jilted by her lover, some other female—if there be one in the house, should it be only the youngest 'tweeny' with a kind heart—will feel this is the most delicate consolation that can be offered.

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Men do not seem to share this point of view—outside of one exception I heard of in my childhood, when a lover lost his lady in some fashion unknown and retired to bed for life. This seemed to me, even at that early, romantic period to be carrying the thing too far; and I can still see the picture formed in my mind at that time, of a poor gentleman sitting up in bed wearing an unbleached calico nightshirt, and eating bread and milk with a metal spoon. I do not know why I imagined him thus, but I suppose that bread and milk and unbleached calico must have been, in those days, my idea of the fitting accompaniments to such a situation.

Still there must be a great many people just now who are experiencing the same feelings as that man did when he retired for good, doubtless saying to himself: "I have had enough of this!" For every time we take up the newspaper, the headlines about murder, misery, anarchy, and starvation fall on the sensitive soul like drops of hot iron, until we feel we could run and hide anywhere to escape them, pulling the clothes over our heads and trying to forget life.

Only we cannot do that—because even if we make the attempt there comes an hour in the middle of the night when bed is changed from a refuge to a place of torment. Some people may not have experienced this horrid transformation, for it is a thing seldom talked of, but I cannot help thinking that most of my neighbours know all about it.

At any rate, those who have awokened in the middle

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of the night to a feeling of heavy depression, without any actual, present cause, will understand the following lines which once floated at such an hour into my mind :

“ There’s a dull end of things
Where no words come,
Where every moment brings
Some old grief home;
With every thought that’s born,
How memory aches—
Oh, come to-morrow morn,
When hope awakes ! ”

Whatever happens in the dark hours we have still before us that which is the heaven-sent result of rest—the return of hope ; for to the natural-minded man and woman things must look better in the morning. I think only when people become a little abnormal through ill-health or some great shock, does that experience of the night continue to cast its shadow over the day.

To the ordinary person, therefore, bed seems to be a restorer of courage as well as a refuge. This became clear to me when an old farmer’s wife said the other day : “ Nowadays of a night I can’t even stand up to a little servant lass with her hair down her back, if she comes in late and checks me ; but of a morning I can face a riggiment yet.”

I thrilled responsive, because I also know exactly what it is like to feel even one little care too much for me on the way upstairs, and to wake after a night

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in bed—safe, restful, delightful bed—with a sense of being equal to anything that Fate can bring.

But in addition to all this, there is a plain, practical reason why bed affords the modern substitute for sanctuary. Because the most persistent enemy or bad-news-monger, when told outright that their prey is in bed, must go away until a more convenient season. This, at least, is the broad rule of humankind—though I have heard of persons who could make an excuse of kindness to do their worst with the poor wretch who lies there at such a disadvantage.

Those able to do so, however, are the exceptionally fortunate ones who have been gifted at birth with a skin more than their fellows, and they, of course, have the best of it everywhere—excepting in that inner life of which they know little and care less. The pricks we feel affect them no more than may an old tortoise be tickled by the dead leaves blowing, after he has drawn himself into seclusion for the winter.

But of course our sanctuary may become our prison. Everybody who has been very run down and at last really ill, knows the whole process. First, the intense relief of escaping for a time from the biting, stinging little cares which have been worrying us for days and weeks; then a faint sense of boredom; a dawning restlessness; a forlorn depression; until at last it seems as if everybody else were going about their own business and pleasure in the world, caring nothing about us. We might be dead already.

That these feelings—though they may sound

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exaggerated—! are an actual part of the fundamental experiences of human beings, is proved by the fact that in the most human religion ever known to mankind, the words, ‘ sick and ye visited me,’ are given an awful significance in the picture of the most tremendous event which can happen to the soul throughout eternity.

The last stage of a distaste for bed endures for a while after recovery, so that we feel a physical repugnance against the very sheets and pillows which used so kindly to invite us. But it seems to belong continuously to the first portion of our lives, for I have yet to discover the normal child who really *likes* going to bed, when nights are gaily shining downstairs, and people wear lovely coloured dresses, and eat delicious food, and make glorious jokes about which they can be heard laughing. At least, that is how it all looks at seven.

No wonder the bright-eyed creature sitting up in bed longs to be downstairs and in the fun. Still we need not really pity her, because she too is finding a refuge there from all the wonders that press in too closely upon her eager mind.

But while bed is a place where grown-ups go when they can bear no more, it has a wider place in life than that; for it is there that countless great thoughts and noble poems first begin to move above the chaos of vague emotion; and—as I believe—it is there where mankind’s most burning prayers are uttered.

ON GIVING

WE often hear that the Lord loveth a cheerful giver, and though this is said in connection with the bestowal of alms, I can't help feeling that He must love even more the sort of soul whom giving *makes* cheerful.

There are, however; certain very estimable people who really—in their heart of hearts—dislike bestowing presents upon their equals. They know nothing of that keen pleasure which makes the gifts of the born giver to be just flowers on the Tree of Life, and not notes of credit laid up in the Bank of Eternity. These reluctant ones—if they are honest—usually have an equal lack of pleasure, in receiving ; for they cannot realise that what is no satisfaction to them can be a joy to any one else.

Then the actual presents are of almost endless variety, ranging from the birthday parcels of early childhood that are all-glorious in a dazzle of morning sunshine now we look back at them, to what may be called the *reluctant conjugal* of later married life ; concerning which the husband—if he is a good husband—will write on a half-sheet of paper, “Remember Mary’s Birthday,” and stick it in his shaving-glass.

He may even—loving his wife truly—purchase for her the kind of offering which I always call in my own mind a *garden roller* ; because a devoted husband of my acquaintance did actually give his elderly and

ON GIVING

bedridden spouse a handsome specimen of that very useful gardening implement, and was hurt that she seemed only tepidly grateful. He was all the more injured because she had previously accepted a long series of similar gifts with every appearance of pleasure and surprise—but every woman has her limit.

At the other extreme is the *lavish conjugal*; the big box of chocolates, entirely unsuitable and very expensive hat, or handsome piece of jewellery—according to circumstances—which a certain type of husband will bring home to a wife who has hard work to make both ends meet, and who is always denying herself those little everyday trifles which make all the difference. She knows that the chocolates or the brooch will mean pinching and screwing for herself and her children during the next week or month, and she begins to plan how she shall do it, wearily, even while she thanks him. And yet such men as a rule are far better thought of than they deserve; for it may be said, with all reverence, that women in this respect are like the Lord, in that they, too, can't help loving a cheerful giver. Meanness, on the other hand, is warranted to take the glamour out of a woman's love sooner than neglect or cruelty or even indifference. Which is idiotic, of course; but so are we made.

For this giving instinct is rooted deep in the innermost recesses of a woman's nature, and the hardest thing many have to face is their inability to continue to give. I am not speaking here of charity, but just of the interchange of little presents between friends

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of the same sort. And those of the new poor who have grown up in the habit of such giving now go about feeling an emptiness all the time because they can do so no longer—as if the birds had given up singing, or something equally pleasant and natural had vanished out of their lives.

Very different are the gifts which act as proxy; the familiar kind subtly indicated in one of Racine's plays, where the woman says: "Voyez moi plus souvent et ne me donnez rien." Which is, roughly paraphrased; "Come to see me more often and keep your gifts to yourself." I suppose, there is hardly one of us who does not feel a little sting behind these words, remembering how we have sent flowers or fruit or a book to somebody who loved us, and was waiting—only to regret our neglect, perhaps too late.

Then there is the *obligatory offering*, which reaches its apotheosis at a fashionable wedding. For the most generous will give then more as a social habit than as a pleasure, unless the young couple are intimate friends, while the remainder simply lump this duty with the income-tax and the other burdens of life, and leave it at that. No sensitive person can walk round the tables set out at a big wedding without feeling that queer chill which is generated in the atmosphere by a large number of lifeless gifts which never had a soul.

In direct contrast to this are the little gifts that pass between neighbours in a country place—the young lettuce, or the little, yellow, freshly-baked

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cake, or the delicate potted meat in its blue-and-white jar—all things we can well spare with just a hint of sacrifice to make them worth while. They are not bestowed because of any need, real or fancied, nor with the slightest idea of doing good, and yet there is scarcely any pleasure equal to giving them, excepting that of receiving the same sort. I wonder if I shall be considered very foolish when I say that I believe our giving in Heaven will be just a little like this—as simply joyous and single in purpose.

There is another type of small gift, however, about which I feel reluctant to say anything—only it is ubiquitous, so I am obliged to come to it. I mean the sort which I always describe to myself as bait—because the donor *does* throw her bread on the waters with a certain amount of lavishness; only she would be very disappointed indeed to get it back again. What she hopes for in return is a good, fat fish, and she is fortunate sufficiently often to make a little wasted bait a negligible affair. I have seen, with my own eyes, a ‘hair-tidy’ made of pink paper bound with green which caught a set of tortoiseshell brushes, so no wonder the system continues to exist.

And while we are on the unpleasant side of the subject, it is perhaps as well to recognise the existence of what may be called the *gift gauge*. It is the oldest mechanical device known to man, and dates, no doubt, from those lively prehistoric times when boys were sport for the then existent frogs, instead of frogs being sport for the boys. It is adjusted by adding the

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world's estimate of the proposed recipient of the gift to the possible benefit which the giver hopes to receive, after which it can be expanded or decreased to correspond with the result obtained. This instrument is in use in every corner of the globe, from the remotest cannibal island to the metropolis of our own country, in which latter place I chanced to see it in the very finest going order at a great store only last week, where it worked as follows :

At the counter, a stout, highly coloured, heavily powdered lady in expensive raiment obviously adjusted the gauge with the autocratic ease of long practice. "I think," she said, "that one of the blue vases will be very nice for Sybil, don't you, Dorothy ? "

And a slim, pretty girl with rather wide eyes replied abruptly : "Mother ! When Sybil has been my best friend down in the country ever since I could toddle ! We can't send her a thing like that. Why, we gave Phyllis a lovely jade chain costing no end, and I hardly know her."

"Don't be so silly," said the lady, glancing over her shoulder. "Sybil won't require such things as jade necklaces when she is married to a poor curate. This vase is much more——"

"But, *mother*, Phyllis has had a jade necklace already ! She has everything ! "

"Of course. That's just why we were obliged to send her something really handsome," said the experienced lady impatiently. "For a girl of your age, Dorothy, you really are——"

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"We can't give Sybil that old vase," persisted Dorothy, face afire. "I call it simply——"

But the lady turned to the shopman, saying with heavy dignity: "The blue vase, if you please. You have my address. *Good* morning." And she sailed out, followed by an angry, mutinous child who might, or might not, learn in time to adjust the gift gauge with equal facility.

Yet that woman in her own childhood might, perhaps, have bought and given away the most delightful presents in the whole world; the sort we saved up our pennies for when we were little, and purchased our ridiculous trifle with such happy pride, so sure of a generous heart which knew how to receive.

For it does require generosity to take in the right way, no less than to give; and in this connection I often think of an old couple who used to live in a place well known to me, where there is a long, grey mere rear which plovers' eggs may be found in the season. It was the custom of the old man—and had been for forty years or more—to take a walk round the mere on a Sunday afternoon once every spring in order to find and bring home a couple of plovers' eggs for his wife's tea. He never gave her any other present, because it was all they could do to live; but every year he used to bring that one offering, and watched her as she ate, always making practically the same remark: "You've gotten your eggs, Maria, so we shall soon have the roses out on the porch now. Summer's coming."

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Then he died. But the neighbour was a kind young woman, so next spring she persuaded her husband to walk round the mere in order to find some plovers' eggs for old Mrs. Brown, though they are much scarcer now than they used to be. And then she came into the cottage with her pleasant face all smiles. "Look, here's your eggs all the same. Now sit you to the table and enjoy them." But the old woman turned her head aside. "Take them away," she said. "I can't abide 'em. I never could."

"But your husband—" began the young woman, astounded. Then her eyes met those other sunken ones, and she became silent, for she too loved her man very dearly and so she understood.

Of course some people would say the old woman had been foolish; that she should have told her young husband the truth forty years before, when he first came in from his Sunday walk all flushed and jubilant because he had something to give. But for my part, I think that this poor, uneducated woman had just been taught by her heart to accept beautifully.

In regard to receiving, a shrewd old Yorkshire-woman said not long ago: "I don't like all I get given, but I'm always pleased with things that come with the right sauce."

And there lies the secret—the right sauce will make any gift 'go down,' and it is the absence of that sauce which causes some people's presents to stick in our throats, however well they are meant.

I do not know exactly what the ingredients are—

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I wish I did ; but this I *do* know—it is flavoured with sympathy and mingled with understanding. Poor and rich alike may have it ; it is something which money cannot buy ; and yet we are only fully aware of it when we find it is not there.

But my perplexity is not new, for, as is well known, it was shared by that knight of old who stood looking doubtfully on the favour given him by his lady, until she said to him at last : “ My lord, what ails my gift ? Is there aught wanting in it ? ”

To which he answered wistfully : “ Dear lady—I think a little of thy love.”

THE CHARM OF MIDDLE AGE

IN our part of the world you may still hear one woman say to another, as a third goes youthfully apparelléd down the street: “There’s an old ewe dressed lamb fashion!” And this remark indicates an attitude of mind which prevailed in just the same exaggerated form in the sixties as its opposite appears to do at the present time. For in those days all lambs dressed like ewes for fear of being thought ridiculous, and now all ewes dress like lambs for fear of being thought out of the movement.

This fear accounts for a great deal; and while there is much to admire in the courage of the gay ‘girl’ of fifty or so who simply *won’t* be old, shrieks with laughter among the boys and girls, and hides the gnawings of rheumatism with a fortitude worthy of the fabled past, she cannot be said to display to advantage the charms of middle age. She is splendid, in a way, as she sits there with her legs crossed, defying the Unconquerable—but she is not charming.

Neither is the faded married woman who bravely continues to show off all the sparkling little tricks she found so successful when she was eighteen, before time put the lines of suffering and experience round her mouth and eyes.

But of course we all want to keep young—whatever we may say to the contrary; the thing is that the woman who is chiefly anxious to be *thought* young

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only defeats her own ends, because the surest way to become really old is to exhaust the energies by fighting desperately against age. Every one has come across the ‘wonderful’ woman who manages by immense unseen efforts to remain almost a girl in appearance and manner until about sixty, when she suddenly collapses into an undignified old hag.

The middle-aged woman who has done this has simply missed, by her own fault, a beautiful natural and normal stretch of human existence; and her experience of life remains by so much incomplete.

No one denies the bravery of those who ‘keep it up’ all through the best part of their lives; but, when the courage is too obvious, we become too aware of one feature, as when we are in the presence of a person with abnormally large ears, and we have a feeling that something is out of proportion. Real courage, of the sort which inspires noble lives, is more permeating and less evident.

It is all very well to make a long nose at Age—but there is no use in doing that when we are obviously trembling all the time at its approach; and to such a degree that our every public action and word is coloured by our fear. If we do that, we lose one of the greatest charms of middle age—the outward glance.

While we are young, we must be preoccupied with ourselves. We must be looking forward—unless we are highly unusual young people—and thinking our own future more important than anything else in

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the world, or the driving force necessary to carry us on would not be there.

But now, at last, in middle age, a woman can have a heart at leisure from itself, if she goes the right way about it.

For she has reached the time which always reminds me of the lull that comes between haymaking and harvest, when every tree stands heavy with leaf, and there begins to be a deeper gold in the sunshine. This is such a beautiful time of life—the crude judgments of youth mellowed by experience and the agony of disillusion ripened to understanding—that it seems a pity any one should fail to enjoy it; as those must do who are pursued by the dread of being considered a ‘back number.’ For here lies the destruction of all the delights of middle age—a plain fact of everyday observation which may be verified by watching that little tragic-comedy which is so often enacted.

Tea being over, the cigarettes are being handed round. The really young nonchalantly light up, thinking nothing of it; and the accustomed older women do so with equal assurance, though with some lingering remembrance of a period when it was a ‘doggy’ thing to do. But there is constantly one who hesitates, then nervously apologises for not smoking. “No feeling *whatever* against it, of course. Very soothing to the nerves, I understand. I really think I *must* begin.”

And on the way home she does buy twenty-five.

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mild Virginians with which to practise in her bedroom in secret ; just as she would practise standing on her head or blacking her nose, if to refrain from these amusements were to class her definitely with the middle-aged. She is so terribly afraid of being seen to experience this most valuable and beautiful part of a woman's life.

The same fear inspires her horror of what she calls 'the middle-aged sprawl.' But if Juno herself were to be attired in a girlish frock, thin stockings, high heels, and a hat squashed over one eye, she would be a figure of fun. Hebe could stand it. Hebe, in fact, would look as charming in it as the pretty girls who go about so dressed at present. But surely those who more resemble Juno might take advantage of the gracious curves of maturity in the same way that women of the past have done, and dress differently from the slim girls whom they now ape.

However, it is not altogether fear of middle age which produces this unfortunate result, but the blighting sameness that has this generation in thrall. We are made even more uneasy by the idea of being thought conventional than were our grandmothers by the suggestion that they were unconventional. It takes more courage to state clear principles of right and wrong, and to say openly that black is still black, than it did to swear at a mid-Victorian tea-party.

We are all—rich and poor, bishops and beggars—scared to death lest we should be considered narrow-minded. That fear makes cowards of us all ; for

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you may call a person vain, and they will smile ; you may call them immoral, and they may even feel flattered—but call them narrow-minded and they have done with you.

Therefore middle-aged women who have this intense desire to belong to a later generation will actually assent to the most astounding theories of the young—theories which the boys and girls will themselves have cast off in a few weeks or months. So afraid of seeming ‘frumpish’ are such as these, that if one of *les jeunes* says the moon is made of green cheese, they will sigh meditatively : “Perhaps it may be so. Who knows !” and feel that now they *must* pass for broad-minded.

Still there is another and very insidious danger besetting the kindly tolerant, ‘middle-aged woman who does fully appreciate the advantages of this part of her allotted span—I mean the temptation to sit in a lump and let the years roll over her.

For after a while her resemblance to an oyster will become outward and physical ; she spreads, she thickens, she is not to be moved from her place. And in the end she is ‘not equal to’ anything which requires the faintest real mental and physical effort.

Better—a thousand times better—to wear a dress that is a glorified chemise, and look like Jezebel, than to sink into such a state as this !

All of which applies, of course, chiefly to women ; but there is a phrase employed by both sexes alike when they are over forty which seems to me a sadder

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indication of age than any other. For when I hear any one say . “I have ceased to expect much of people,” I know it is a sign their hearts are growing old.

But those who say so seldom mean what they think they do ; because consciously or unconsciously, we all go on to our life’s end expecting from people what we are ready to give them. We may fail sometimes to receive help and sympathy from quarters whence we think we had a right to hope for it, but we also get it from sources whence we had no right to expect anything. And it is an unpleasant fact that if we look back with real honesty upon our own lives, we must see that we have thus failed others, just as some have failed us. And yet we know that a great deal may still with reason be expected of us.

Those who make the same allowance for the human race which they hope to receive, can never truthfully repeat the slogan of middle age : “ I have ceased to expect much of people.” For they have only to be very ill or in great trouble, and somebody in the world will make plain to them once more the inexhaustible kindness of man.

Beyond all this, middle age is the time of freedom, when a woman begins to care less than during those vivid, uneasy years of girlhood what people are thinking of her. She loses the defiant ‘ don’t care a hang ! ’ attitude of early youth, which is the unconscious sign of caring tremendously, and a pleasant detachment enables her to enjoy her sense of humour. She

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will see at that stage, if she thinks about it, how she has all the time loved those near to her less for their goodness or cleverness than for some dear funniness in them which will keep their memory alive and green always—as if it were only yesterday.

But there is one hidden hour in middle life that has to be lived through by almost every woman and which nothing can make happy—it is when she lies awake in the night before her fortieth birthday, saying to herself: “To-morrow I shall be between forty and fifty!” There must come then a chill in the air. And again when she stares into the darkness, saying the dreadful words: “To-morrow I shall be between fifty and sixty!” For the cold shadow of the end falls across her heart as she lies there, telling the tale of her years.

I think there is only one thing that disperses that cold shadow, and so prevents it from clouding all remaining hopes and joys—I mean the *power of an endless life*. Even if there is a period of depression, that power must bring back before long a feeling of space, freedom, and sunshine, because every day is lived against the immense background of immortality.

It was Walt Whitman—then a modern of the moderns—who wrote, addressing youth: “Do you know that Old Age may come after you with equal force, grace, fascination?”

This is equally true of middle age—but force, grace, fascination must be given a chance.

GOSSIP

THE right sort of gossip is a charming and stimulating thing. The *Odyssey* itself is simply glorious gossip, and the same may be said of nearly every tale of mingled fact and legend which has been handed down to us through the ages. But the wrong sort of gossip is responsible for half the misery in the world.

Men are generally understood to be less given to this amusement than women, and the most ardent lover of her sex must own that no ordinary husband would go home and tell his wife that he had met Brown wearing a fourth new suit since Christmas. The more restricted interests of the vast majority of women do oblige them to seek distraction where they can find it, which is very often next door or down the street ; but nobody can see a man devouring the evening paper without suspecting that this taste in him has only found a different outlet, because every newspaper is interesting to the ordinary reader in proportion as it is salted with gossip.

And after all, is there not something a little inhuman about a woman who does not care whether her next-door neighbours are ill or well, happy or unhappy ? Nobody who has not lived in one of those dull-looking, grey streets, or in the restricted circle of a village, can know how much love, pity, and kindness may flow from the same source as all this tittle-tattle about each other's failings. Which is the bright side of gossip. But another aspect is a real danger to social

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life, and has been recognised as such during the whole period of history.

The most difficult kind to deal with in actual experience is that manufactured by the woman who talks scandal and then repeats her own remark at the next house of call as having been made by her unwilling listener. For instance, she may say: "All very well for Mrs. So-and-so to talk about indigestion, but one knows that unmistakable drugged look well enough." And though you instantaneously deny ever having seen any such look on Mrs. So-and-so's face, that makes no difference—you are saddled with the responsibility for a malicious and untrue report.

Less dangerous, perhaps, but still more insidious, is the gossip who poses as being unable to speak unkindly of any one. He or she will praise an acquaintance for five minutes, bestowing upon the unfortunate person a list of charms and virtues which would be a little excessive for George Eliot, Ninon de l'Enclos, and Florence Nightingale rolled into one—and then will probably conclude after this fashion: "But it does seem rather a pity—doesn't it?—that the dear thing can't help losing her money at bridge and saving it out of the housekeeping? Those poor children look terribly anaemic, and no wonder! I'm sure, though, she means no harm; it is just because she has never thought."

More common still, and comparatively harmless because so easily detected, is the male or female

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gossip who murmurs in corners. Such people would not mention the story to any one else save yourself in the whole world, of course ; but *you* are different—*you* alone are ready to be cut up small before you would divulge a single word told to you in confidence ; and for that reason *you* are the sole repository of all their secrets.

Only the very young or the very unobservant, however, are taken in by this—because five minutes after the end of one earnest conclave, the professional confider may be seen in another corner with another victim, obviously telling the same tale.

But the strangest thought in connection with the whole subject lies in the tragic difference between the little pebble of gossip flung at random into the waters of life and the immensity of the ever-increasing circles which result. Many a woman has made a sharp speech or an unkind remark at a tea-party with no intention of doing harm, and when she lies cold in her grave those circles still go on widening and widening—disturbing happy lives.

Then there is the endless speculation concerning courtship. It seems to me that the little god of Love must often be ready to break his bow and pitch away his arrows when he sees the incredible futility of the trifles which create gossip and so spoil promising matches. Somebody happens to see the couple talking in the street—that person tells a sister of the young man—she chaffs him mercilessly at the family table ; and the next time he sees the girl coming an

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inward ferment of shyness and longing makes him bolt up a side street to avoid her. She in her turn is offended and bestows her budding feelings of romance elsewhere—and a happy marriage does not take place.

An incident of this sort once led to the breaking off of an engagement in a country place which I used to know well. A young farmer there had been somewhat too much of a general lover before he settled upon one sweetheart in particular, but at this time he was truly attached to his Emily, with no thought of anybody else. It was about a month before the wedding, on a moonless night, very soft and still; and as he led a white heifer past the public-house the door suddenly opened, the light streamed forth, and a man stumbled out into the road, a little confused in his brain by too much beer. Now this husband on returning home endeavoured like many another to placate his wife by offering her a scrap of gossip—he had just seen that young So-and-so walking out with somebody in white, and it wasn't the right girl, because she was at Doncaster.

Next morning the wife, of course, told a neighbour—the neighbour repeated it to a friend—the friend passed it on to the mother of the prospective bride. And though the fiancé was able to explain everything, the girl said she felt upset. She thought, on the whole, she would prefer to have a young man that could lead *anything* home at night—plain or coloured—without giving rise to talk.

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But tragedies have come of incidents no less ridiculous than this which hardly bear thinking about. Everybody who reaches years of discretion must have encountered, either first hand or from familiar hearsay, some case of this sort which has been branded on the mind and will remain there while memory lasts. A doctor, dogged by a persistent scandal which never had any root but pure kindness for a suffering and unhappy woman, who ends by taking poison; a girl dismissed from her employment through the agency of a malicious tongue, who loses hope and goes to the bad—the ghosts press round us when we once begin to think.

Still there is always a danger of going too far in the other direction, as was proved by an old gardener whom I knew in my early childhood. I was—let it be confessed—somewhat of a talker myself even in those days, and for this reason, I suppose, the old man's dislike for conversation deeply impressed me. At any rate, I felt driven at last to try to get to the bottom of it. So one day when he was digging potatoes, I ventured to say to him in my most polite manner: "William, would you very much mind telling me why you don't like talking?"

He dug up two roots of potatoes while I waited anxiously, standing first on one foot and then on the other; and at last he grunted over his shoulder: "If you say nowt, you say nowt wrong."

So I went back to the house, trying to puzzle it out. But now I know exactly what he meant, I

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still feel uneasy in the presence of those who weigh every word before speaking lest it should be of disadvantage to themselves at some future time, and I can't help preferring a generous-hearted gossip.

But for one type I find no pardon and no excuse : I mean the *conversational body-snatchers* — those individuals who prowl about the burying-grounds of past mistakes and misdemeanours, elated if they can dig up some decayed scandal with which to startle and horrify the neighbours. Many a man and woman has settled down in a strange neighbourhood, honestly determined to lead a new life, and to do that which is lawful and right, only to be confronted after months or years of endeavour by the exhumed past. ‘Gossip’ is too kind a word for such prowlers, and they should be branded with a scarlet letter on their foreheads so that the world may know them for what they are.

But the well-meaning sometimes are workers of evil, and the kind, deaf, elderly body—though it seems rather cruel to say so—is often unconsciously a great purveyor of mistaken information ; for she hears only half a tale, and if at all quick-witted tries to imagine the rest, so as to avoid asking for a repetition of the remark. Her intentions are excellent, and no one can help admiring her spirit, but her system does produce some extraordinary results. As in the familiar instance when a poor lady who caught three words, “bishop—elephant—engine,” and most ingeniously pieced together a story about a neighbouring dignitary of the Church being in a railway accident

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caused by an elephant on the line. How the elephant came there, she did not pause to consider, but on being questioned she rose gamely to the occasion. "Oh, it wandered away from a wild-beast show, my dear, of course," she responded at once.

* Still, however hard people may try to be discreet, there is no doubt that every lovable man and woman must say things that would be better left unsaid. No one can be for ever thinking of the effect of their words. Only so long as people think nothing really cruel, they cannot say it—and cruelty is what injures the soul.

MONEY AND HAPPINESS

When in our early youth we learned painfully to form the syllables, “Money cannot buy happiness,” we believed what we wrote—because, of course, a copy-book could not lie. And yet the thought passed through our little minds, even then, that money *could* buy chocolates, dolls, tin soldiers. It is the grown-up realisation of this hovering idea which makes men and women who are neither self-indulgent nor materially minded desire to be rich.

But the source of the greatest misunderstanding in regard to wealth comes from the utter inability of some people among both rich and poor—and they the most articulate—to comprehend either poverty or riches. There is the woman of means, for instance, with delicate features and a general air of exquisiteness, who clasps her hands and says in fervent tones: “I could easily go without a meal a day, but I must have my flowers, if only a handful of daffodils in a mug.” And the listeners naturally think what a very superior soul that lady’s soul must be—whereas, as a plain matter of fact, it simply proves that she is a person with an entire ignorance of the meaning of the word poverty. Never in her life has she been obliged to let her stomach go really empty to fill her eye—though she may have taken cod at the fishmonger’s instead of salmon in order to spend the difference on roses.

Equally, the wage-earner of a certain type is unable to grasp that any one can be short of money who has

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a large house and a staff of servants. He is unjust through sheer ignorance, and it seems as if the light of more knowledge on both sides can alone adjust those inequalities in the human lot which appear inevitable in a world inhabited by human beings.

But this question has been darkened to a degree which one can scarcely realise yet, by the attitude of those in all civilised nations who have recently achieved wealth without accepting any responsibilities. These people have somehow developed one prevailing characteristic, and that to an abnormal degree: I mean, that queer, distorted joy lurking among the dregs at the bottom of the human mind, which makes us desire to produce envy.

In the mass of decent, ordinary folk this lust is subconscious. They simply do not know how far their satisfaction in possessing a good car, or a first-class railway pass, or a well-cut gown, is sharpened and accentuated by the fact that their neighbour cannot have the same.

But these men, women, and even children (so well caricatured by Bateman) have allowed this feeling to grow until their consciousness of exciting envy is visible to everybody who sets eyes on them. When Mr., Mrs., Master, and Miss Moneyglutton sit at table in a fabulously expensive restaurant, or alight from a magnificent motor-car, they are never at ease in their enjoyment, because they are all the time restlessly occupied in glancing round to see if they are obtaining their full meed of envy.

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All this is clear enough, but one point has always puzzled me in thinking about the question of money, and it lies in the often-heard remark : " If only *I* were as rich as So-and-so, I know what I should do."

But should we ? Have we not come across rich people who did once say that very thing, yet failed to carry out any of those dreams of their youth, and behaved just the same as all the others ? Perhaps they are like the woman who announced to her family that if she were lucky enough to win a certain lottery for five hundred pounds, she should buy for herself the fur coat she had always wanted, and a new lathe for her husband, and a glorious mechanical train for her little boy. But when by a most unexpected chance she did win it, she put the whole lot in the bank and gave the family *éclairs* for afternoon tea. Money brought a feeling of responsibility, so she had no more desire to fulfil her dream. And I suppose it is like that — possessions do not weigh down our dreams until we have them—and we can soar where we like with empty pockets.

Still there was one time in my own life when ten shillings and sixpence actually had the power to purchase for me pure, undiluted happiness. It was when I was a girl, and *The Pall-Mall Gazette* paid me that sum for a poem, which was the first money I ever earned by my pen. That I did spend in the dream way, down to the last farthing ; and I remember my mother crying happy tears over the trumpery little gift which was her share.

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But the joy to me, of course, was not in the money so much as what it then meant. I saw myself walking through the world (always in a gown with a train and a new hat), while all the people I met nudged each other, saying with bated breath : "There goes the Authoress!" It is needless to add that on the few occasions when I am locally recognised now the phrase runs instead : "Is *that* an authoress? Oh, I thought they were *quite* different to that." Exactly in the tone of the lady who found a sea-anemone, and felt herself defrauded because it had no stalk and smelt of fish.

I can't help wondering, as I write this, whether others who read it also have memories of money that once seemed to buy them pure happiness—and if so, what they are.

One thing, however, is certain : the surest way of achieving *unhappiness* with regard to money, is by indulging in that gruesome folly called 'waiting for dead men's shoes.' If a true account could be written of those who, even at the present moment, are becoming weakened in purpose, guilty of mean tricks, committing hideous crimes—that terrible crescendo of evil—simply from this one cause, every one would be aghast at it. And all this demoralisation often takes place with no reward at the end ; for those with money to leave particularly if they have no distinct and obvious heir, such as a wife or child, are very apt to cherish that love of power stretching beyond the grave which is so strange and yet human.

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The old man, deprived of outside influence, consoles himself by thinking of the surprise he can still give when his will is made public; for he is unable to realise that he may not somehow be present, though he is dead, to see how they take it.

Still we must have money; and we must concern ourselves about it. Only it is wise to guard against one mistake if we do not wish to find in it a source of endless irritation; I mean, the mistake of *not* cutting our coat according to our cloth. If we will try to have more length, or more spring in the skirt, than the material will allow, we must feel a tightness somewhere; and that will serve to remind us, every time we move, of the fact that when stuff was given out we got less than we considered right. Let us go about freely and cheerfully in a monkey jacket, if necessary—and unless we are on the look out for envy we shall have happiness. Otherwise, with our fine appearing tails, there will also be that tight feeling in the armholes; and our minds will grow narrow from a constant suggestion of narrowness.

There are, of course, two ways of becoming rich: the negative process of not spending, and the positive process of making. A combination of the two is thrift—that much-abused and out-of-date virtue which forms a necessary foundation for all culture and all art, without which neither could exist.

But even this estimable quality, when carried to excess, will produce that joy in chasing ha'pennies for the sake of the sport, and not from the spur of

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necessity, which is no less cramping to the mind than the obsession of a hunting man who only lives between the first cub-hunting morning and the last meet of the spring. Sometimes this love of the ha'penny hunt has its comic side, as in the case of a retired merchant of ample means who used every morning to go round the little, low shops in our village, insisting on the reduction of a farthing on a lettuce here, and on a loaf there. But he was a decent sort, was Discount Willie, as the neighbours called him ; and so they cheerfully put on the farthing for him to knock off again, like a game of commercial Aunt Sally. This, however, was a sport only for a more leisured age, and could no more be played with us now than cricket in top hats.

But while we find out for ourselves soon enough on our way through life that money will not buy happiness, we also stick to that other secret impression of our copy-book days. It *does* buy dolls and tin soldiers. It *will* take us to somebody we love—though it cannot make that person love us. Further than that, it *may* cause the loveless to pretend so well that they deceive even themselves, for a time ; because golden dust in the atmosphere may be so deceiving to the vision that nothing can be plainly seen through it.

UNSPOKEN CONVERSATIONS

We are told that speech is used only to conceal thought, but in my experience this is not quite true. Speech is more often employed to display the particular thought which we want others to see. But as all ordinarily quick-witted people have at least three thoughts about everything, there is necessarily a good deal still hidden.

Therefore half the fun in life—and no small part of its unpleasantness—comes from listening to these unspoken remarks which wil' insist on making themselves heard by the ears of the mind. Polite-hearted people ignore them decently, just as they would an intimate under-garment peeping from under a cushion on a drawing-room sofa, and it is certain that no one should ever recommend to the young this study of unspoken conversations; for they confuse the point of view, and are apt to make too eager listeners less interested in the actual spoken word. This appears rude, and is very unprofitable—because nothing is more certain than the social success of the person who sees only the thought intended to be seen.

I know this for the simple reason that I, myself, always want to meet such an acquaintance again. I am ready to bestow good food and drink on him or her, with no prospect of any return in amusement, sympathy, or help. So are most of my neighbours, I think. It is such a rest to the soul, when the air

UNSPKEN CONVERSATIQNS

hums with vibrations left by a recent row, to feel sure that the caller who has interrupted it wi', hear nothing beyond the conventional words of greeting.

For some callers would also have heard the hostess saying aloud: "So pleased to see you." But with an equally keen ear for the unspoken: "Bother the woman! Now she will go all round the place and say my husband and I don't get on together. And there are no cakes for tea. I do wish she would go!"

So the too perceptive caller would have gone, leaving the hostess to feel at first relieved, and then sore and uncomfortable for hours afterwards. But the one who only hears the spoken word 'eaves behind nothing but calmed nerves and kind feelings.

All the same, though a capacity for hearing unspoken conversations does not pay in any practical sense, it makes the dullest talk interesting and renders people delightful who would otherwise be intolerable bores. It really causes boredom to become a social impossibility.

I will give an instance. The other day I was hemmed in between two stout matrons, exceeding complacent, who had taken their daughters to a dance the night before. They talked over their lacey ample chests to each other, throwing me a word now and then because they know me, and had been nicely brought up. One was attired in plum colour, the other in green.

Mrs. Plum, sitting well back and folding her pink hands, said aloud: "I hear your girl was greatly

WHAT I HAVE GATHERED

admired last night. A dear thing ! Not at all like the modern young woman ! And her delightfully simple frock ! I only wish I could induce my Ernestine to dress ~~in~~ that style."

And as plainly to the discerning ear, she also said : "*I can afford to be generous to your dowdy little daughter in her awful home-made gown, for she will never stand in my girl's way—that's certain !*"

But after a while my hostess saw with pity my neglected condition, so drew me forth, murmuring that she feared I had been frightfully bored. And when I said I had been very well entertained, she thought it nice of me but untruthful; for I could not, of course, explain, because no decent person repeats what they have heard in unspoken conversations—excepting now and then an author !

Sometimes, however—above and beyond all this—there come certain high moments in life when two people, loving each other, and both having that inner ear further sharpened by emotion, can hear things which they would never have deemed themselves or the other one capable of thinking.

I believe when a man and girl are truly in love, and tell each other so for the first time, they almost always hold these wonderful unspoken conversations. He says aloud : "My word—what jolly hair you have !" But his unspoken words are these : "You are all the loveliness of life made manifest. The morning stars sang together when you were born. You are the purpose of the ages."

UNSPOKEN CONVERSATIONS

Is it any wonder that when he remarks again, a couple of years later : " My word—what jol'y hair you have ! " there should be a difference ? For this time the words heard by that inner ear may be only a rueful : "*Poor girl ! I do wish she wouldn't think she looks her best with her head covered and spend so much on hats.*"

Still there is, after all, another sort of talk without words which only becomes yearly a little more complete and satisfying. You may often hear it passing between a husband and wife who have grown old, continuing to love each other ; and between two elderly sisters who are facing their sunset with such calm joy in what they have had in life that they do not think of what they have missed ; and between a mother and daughter who are true companions. And this growing so near in soul that words begin to be a little unnecessary even now—as we hope they may be entirely afterwards—is a very beautiful part of life ; it takes a place in our thoughts near all those other lovely things which justify us in loving life despite its many sorrows.

MOCK-ORIGINALITY

ORIGINALITY is what made God think of flowers—
mock-originality is what makes a man walk down
Piccadilly with his tongue out.

But the two have become so confused that people
are obliged to think a moment before they can see the
difference, and even then they are not quite certain.

When you see a young girl of innocent appearance
and an intelligent brow walk into a quiet room where
her aunts are assembled, and say without warning :
“ I don’t believe in marriage. Free unions, and
go off as soon as you are tired, is the only sane and
decent system,” you give a gasp, and think to your-
self : “ Well, if this isn’t originality, what is ? ”

Only—when you get your wind and remember
that every cockerel in the land holds the same view,
you cease to be impressed.

A great deal of mock-originality arises from a
human desire to be ‘ noticed,’ and the early stirrings
of it can be seen to advantage at any children’s party.

Round the table sit the nicely behaved little girls
and boys all receiving equal attention ; but one spoilt
little boy pines to be in the limelight—and as every-
body is good, he cannot hope to get there by being
good, so he boldly determines to be bad. With one
desperate, well-directed shot, he hits his hostess in
the eye with a piece of sugar icing—and the thing is
done.

It is such a success from the point of view of

MOCK-ORIGINALITY

notoriety that, in spite of unpleasant consequences, he never forgets the lesson ; and when he grows up, and all his fellow-countrymen are filled with generous loyalty towards their country in some time of adversity, he will violently take the other side. He probably does not mean what he says, though he may persuade himself that he is sincere ; but he really wants to get notice. If the world is touched to reverence by some heroic deed, he may throw mud at a hero whom in his deepest heart he admires. He can't help it, because he has become an incurable mock-original.

The same thing applies to the lady of whom all her friends say she is : " So original, my dear," because she does something which her next-door neighbour does not do. They fail to see that the most original thing in life is to conform to the rules of conduct with an independent point of view.

Some years ago I remember that it was considered the height of originality to wear a small tortoise attached by a chain to the dress bodice, the shell set with diamonds ; but though I was young at the time, and much impressed by the extraordinary daring of this ornament, I did even then vaguely recall that many quite undistinguished people had had an assortment of little animals crawling over them so far back as history records.

The great disadvantage in being a female professional mock-original—for it really is a paying game when well played—is the tiringness of the career. For

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no sooner does the poor thing discover a taking idea which will read well in society papers—or create comment at the local tennis club, as the case may be—than some admirer, imitates her and does it badly. Then the creator is obliged to see herself as in a convex looking-glass, and has to spend precious hours in finding something else. Perhaps that is why ladies of this type so often attain a look of interesting weariness and are mostly slender; it being obviously difficult to grow fat under such a strain.

It seems to me, however, that there is one almost infallible rule by which you can discern a *real* original; he or she is so anxious to seem ordinary.

THE LARK OF BEING ALIVE

Boys all know the feeling. You have only to stand at the gate of any village school at midday and see them come forth with a rush and a kick, to feel it so strongly yourself that you want to rush and kick too.

Any grown-up person who can even simulate rather freely this glorious attitude, may make a fortune and be a success in life without any other unusual qualification whatever. But it is essential that a little of the genuine emotion should have survived the passing of the years.

When I think of the many actors and actresses whom I have seen, I cannot think of one having this quality, who has failed to succeed. Best of all, I remember an old clown at Hengler's Circus in my childhood, who used to run out amid that delightful smell of stable and sawdust, imitating unconsciously the kick and rush of the little boys from school, and the entire audience at once began to feel jollily responsive, just because there was a spark of the real thing still alive within him.

So I am not at all surprised that in olden days, when kings were kings and got what they wanted, there was always one of these '*lark-o-be-al've*' people ready at hand at every court to act as a dispeller of melancholy; and if only I were back in the Middle Ages with the necessary income, I know at least two people on the stage at present whom I should command to

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be dressed in expensive silk patchwork and attached to my retinue for life.

Some have wondered how jesters came to be allowed such freedom, even by explosive monarchs like Bluff King Hal ; but I can quite understand any potentate saying in effect : “ All right : be rude ! Only for Heaven’s sake make me feel again as if I wanted to run into a sunny world with a rush and a whoop. Then all will be forgiven.”

The fact that no such appointment has been made—so far as is known—at the present court of this realm, is no sign that the quality itself remains unappreciated by the rich and great. On the contrary, it has never been so popular before.

For while some people say that musical comedies and revues are popular because of the legs of the ladies, those of us to whom a lady’s legs are a commonplace of daily personal existence know that they cannot possibly be influenced by this motive. As a matter of fact, what many enjoy is just the pretty girls running out to a burst of merry music. The piece may be so dull and trite that no other part of the evening is worth while, but if there was that jolly moment at the beginning, it may leave us gaily attuned to bear even a short, inebriated person with a false figure behind and an orange wig.

The same applies to those hustling farces which are just a valiant attempt to bang the bladder and cry, ‘ Here we are again ! ’ all the time ; for if by chance one of the leading actors or actresses possesses

THE LARK OF BEING ALIVE

that spark of the real thing, we must laugh with them ; and nothing kills criticism like gratitude.

No wonder, therefore, that creatures so intelligent as the society girls of the present day should have grasped the value of this 'lark-to-be-alive' attitude, nor is it surprising that they endeavour—without reasoning the thing out, of course—to convey the impression that they are always having a splendid time. Anything less is an admission of failure, and you can see them looking over their shoulders, wondering if the rest of the crowd sees how awfully jolly they are. They know—without being aware of their knowledge—that because we English are not gay as other nations understand gaiety, we are ready to give anything to those who can impart the feeling that it is a lark to be alive.

THIN SKIN AND THICK SKIN

"PARENTS invite the Fairy Godmother with an eye to all sorts of gifts which seem to ensure happiness, but so far as I know, none of them have ever mentioned the thing which really does it in this world."

So though the august visitor may hint that she intends to bestow genius or beauty or wealth or goodness, that ought not to influence a worldly-wise mother in the least. She should still cry out with the utmost energy of which she is capable: "Take or leave all that, just as you like, only give my child a thick skin."

For a person with a thick skin goes about the world like a man in a shirt of iron mail amongst a crowd wearing summer zephyrs warranted not to fade; he or she remains as immune as that from the pricks and jeers which annoy other people—as able to hurt without being hurt back.

There is no doubt that the thin-skinned are constantly hindered by stopping to rub their bruises, and so lose ground where others push on. For instance, Mrs. Thick-Skin and Mrs. Thin-Skin meet at a tea-party. Both have daughters, for whom they wish to secure invitations from a third and more important lady who is about to give a small dance.

Mrs. Thin-Skin begins nervously: "Lovely weather! Almost too warm for dancing unless (flushing a little) one has a ballroom such as yours,

THIN'SKIN AND THICK SKIN

of course. My daughters—I actually have two daughters out now, you know—tell me you have a floor that wou'd make an Archdeacon dance, ha-ha ! ”

“ Really ! ” says the important lady ; then, turning to her other neighbour : “ About that Guild we were just mentioning—”

The Mrs. Thin-Skin drinks off the rest of her tea, clinking the cup and saucer together with a trembling hand, and goes away determined that Rosemary and Joan shall stay at home for the remainder of their lives before she will fish for another dance invitation.

Meanwhile Mr. Thick-Skin makes a similar attempt, only with vastly more assurance ; to be met in a like manner by the experienced Important Lady. But *she* does not flush or clink her cup and saucer : she only waits for a day or two until—having gathered together a sufficient number of mufflers or helmets or votes for indigent scholars—she calls again upon the Important Lady bearing them with her, and insists on a personal interview to explain something which requires no explanation.

And a week later, among the list of those present at the charming little dance, etc. etc., are seen the names of Miss Rosemary and Joan Thick-Skin. The Misses Thin Skin sigh a little on reading it, and wonder enviously how those Thick-Skins always *do* manage to be ‘ in it.’

Really, with so many extraordinary inventions nowadays, one almost wonders why some material for artificially producing such a very valuable addition

WHAT I HAVE GATHERED

to the equipment of any man or woman has never been drawn from air or earth or water, and sold at so much an ounce, like radium. As a matter of fact, it has often been offered under various names such as the ‘hardening process,’ and ‘finding your own level,’ ‘cultivating self-reliance,’ and so on; but no substitute is satisfactory. The thin skin remains, and any chance blow may hit some tender place which the hardening process has failed to harden.

Still it is very difficult to detect at first sight who wears the real thing and who the substitute. For you may come across a little, pompous man with an apparently brassy exterior, and at the first glance you congratulate him as being one of the lucky ones. But after a while you realise that he is thus always—as it were—flashing the brass in your eyes, because he has suffered so much from chance knocks that he wants people to think him invulnerable.

Another variety of the thin-skinned—more easy to recognise—is the gushing, middle-aged woman who cries out in the first breath: “What a perfect green! What exquisite flowers! How well that hat suits you, dear!” When she is really holding a shield between herself and those little blows which she nervously fears.

It makes you want to call out: “All right! All right! Nobody is going to hurt you.” You feel ashamed, somehow, of the bitter hardness of people and life.

The luckiest of all, however, are those rare beings

THIN'SKIN AND THICK SKIN

who possess the gift of temporarily being able to slough the thick-skin at will. These invariably achieve great things. It is very interesting to observe the process in action. For instance—rich Mr. Brown is exceedingly rude to aspiring Mr. Jones. But Mr. Jones does not feel in the least ruffled, because he has his ulterior object so plainly in view that he does not feel the blow. When, however, some one offers him a slight from whom he has nothing to gain, he can feel and express a perfectly genuine indignation. He not only says he is hurt ; he *is* hurt.

But one consolation is left to the thin-skinned. Though they truly envy those others and say they would change places if they could, and mean it when they say it—they secretly harbour a dim sense of superiority in their hearts, which does no good but is rather comforting.

THE SPORT OF TRACKING FATE

A GREAT many people are born with the sporting instinct which they are unable to gratify. Females, particularly, are normally debarred from stalking any sort of game which is really worth while. The mother of a small family, for instance, may possess all the feelings which would induce her to sit for hours in a tree waiting for a tiger to go by, and yet she remains obliged to occupy a low chair before the nursery fire at stated intervals all day. The father equally may burn with a desire to crawl on his stomach after the monarch of the glen, and yet he has to run round on his hind legs from ten to six, trying to make somebody buy something they don't particularly want.

It is to such that I would say: "Waste no more time in vague, inarticulate regrets, but start now, to-day, tracking the biggest game on the face of the earth. Then by the mildest chimney-corner, in the dullest street, you will never lack the healthy thrill which comes from following the chase."

I am not speaking at random this time, for I know. Because it is this sport which chiefly makes my writing of quiet novels a thrilling and engrossing pursuit. I try to track through these imaginary lives, how important events may result from trifles of no account. I love to trace how a cold in the head may alter the course of a person's whole existence.

THE SPORT OF TRACKING FATE

For, viewed in this light, the very dullest-seeming lives grow tremendously interesting. The heavy tread of the most stupid caller may really be the foot-step of Fate. Every one who has passed childhood can look back and see that this has already happened—“If I had gone to that tea-party!” “If I had not taken that holiday!” “If I had been at home on such a day!”

When we begin to consider, we can all track Fate so easily in our own lives that there is no particular sport in it. But the fun starts when we endeavour to follow the scent in the lives of those around us.

Take any ordinary tennis party, where there are men and girls together, and you will see plainly that a new blouse bought on impulse at a sale may lead to a young man looking closer: the closer look may lead to several dances at a ball next winter; the dances may lead to an engagement—a marriage—riches—poverty—sons and daughters—happiness—broken hearts. All the rich chances of life are there: and they may come quite directly from the accident of a girl wearing a new blouse on a certain occasion.

Then a careless child throws away a banana skin, an elderly gentleman slips on the banana skin, sits down and says “Damn!” You would think that was a matter wholly between the child, the banana skin, and the elderly gentleman. But this is not so. The elderly gentleman’s state of mind is so affected by the fall that he goes to his office in a distinctly bad temper. There he quarrels with his son, who goes off in a huff

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and takes a ticket for Canada. The girl he leaves behind him gets tired of waiting and marries somebody else : the man drinks ; the children are nervous and overstrung ; eventually one of them in a fit of temper murders a prominent 'public man—and all from a banana skin !

Any one can see for themselves what endless opportunities there are for tracking Fate. And the result of this chase is more important than any other, for the hunter finds that the commonest, most futile seeming life is always worth while—a smile in passing may even result in the regeneration of a world.

CULTIVATING HUMOUR

PEOPLE talk about cultivating a sense of humour when the most we can do is to hope humbly that a sense of humour may cultivate us.

Many try to cultivate it, of course. You cannot go into any public eating-place in these days without seeing at least one group of persons who are he-hawing about nothing, in the vain, pathetic hope that others may think they are being funny. You cannot listen to the conversations at any gathering without hearing at least one earnest cultivator of humour describe some ordinary, serious incident as being ‘most amusing.’ You cannot escape anywhere from the determined humorist who has ‘simply screamed’ at something which is no more a genuine laughter-raiser than my door-mat.

There is no stranger feature of modern life than this eagerness to find something to laugh at, and when you see people sitting in rows before the stage watching a rather dreary mixture of song and dialogue and dance, and note the way in which their tails all wag and their noses quiver like dogs expecting scraps at the breakfast-table, and how they break into a sharp yapping of applause when even a poor little meatless joke is thrown to them across the footlights, you do feel sorry—particularly if you also are one of the applauding crowd. We want to laugh, so we do laugh; but we wish there were something really to laugh at.

WHAT I HAVE GATHERED

In the old days, people were not on the look out for jokes, but jokes happened—the splendid, jolly ones which were funny in the Stone Age when the first man sat down by accident on a sharpened flint, and which will last so long as human nature endures.

It sometimes seems as if real jollity were far less prevalent now than we all seek the amusing, than it was when amusement was thought rather a low thing. But I believe that the meanest and dullest of us can find it easily enough still, so long as we go seriously about the world and give the sense of humour a chance to cultivate us.

Fun is the sunshine of life and keeps the heart sweet, but you begin to doubt it when your neighbour at tea says soulfully : “ My dear, I always believe in looking out for the *funny* side of everything, don’t you ? I find it such a help.”

My instant desire is to reply, rudely and untruthfully, that I hate the funny side—that I have never seen a joke, that I hope I never may.

For I know one thing, if a sense of humour does die, it will be killed by those who have tried to cultivate it.

There is no use whatever in looking out for new jokes, because there are none. In the very beginning when dogs and cats and men and trees were all sorted out in their respective varieties, jokes were sorted out too, and they were placed firmly in the Universe with ‘ *This is a joke*,’ plainly underneath them. It is, of course, possible to cross one of the stock jokes

CULTIVATING HUMOUR

with another, and so make varieties slightly different ; but to a man from Mars they would appear the same. The newest joke in the latest review has the very same markings of its far back ancestor, and the nearer they resemble the original type, the more truly are they enjoyed. The reason is that when we listen once more to the old, old cause of so much laughter, something primitive within us stirs responsive. We hear, in our own laughter, jolly echoes from the beginning of fun.

THE LUXURY OF A ROW

SOME few things are still commonplace necessities to one sex and luxuries to the other. A row, for instance, is seldom regarded as a luxury by the ordinary man. But if he really wants one, and is in the position of a master, he can indulge this desire immediately upon entering his office by kicking the office cat, blowing up the office boy, reprimanding a junior, asking the correspondence clerk what the d—l he means by certain blanked proceedings, and reporting the telephone operator.

A woman, who is a mistress, may also kick the cat, scold the between-maid, and severely rebuke the cook. But the results in the evening are almost incredibly different.

For the man, on assuming his coat to go home, sees the office cat sneaking meekly back to its place near the coal-box and the office boy departs whistling up the street to return next morning just the same as ever. The junior will drown his woes in a cinema palace, and forget them, while the correspondence clerk will never dream of ceasing to correspond. It is a case of ‘as you were’—with the plain, dry-bread necessity of a row taken as a matter of course.

But how would the woman stand? Character injured for ever in the eyes of her offspring by kicking the cat, which now scuttles at her approach. Between-maid insolently under notice to leave, and cook walking down the path to the waiting cab outside. Dinner

THE LUXURY OF A ROW

uncooked. Upheaval. Discomfort. Misery. With the tortures of servant-hunting in prospect for the next fortnight.

Thus it becomes plain that a row is a luxury which a woman, even in these enlightened days, can afford to share only with her husband —and yet, as often as not, he begrudges her this poor privilege.

She may have been simmering all day with the same emotion which animated him at the office, and when he comes home and lays down a hot pipe on the polished table, she begins, through her annoyance, to feel a subconscious thrill of pleasurable excitement.

“Sorry,” he says, hastily removing the pipe.

“It’s a queer thing,” she says, drawing down her lips, “that you should enjoy ruining your own furniture.”

“But I don’t. What nonsense!” he replies, rather shortly.

“Every polished surface in the house is like the top of a table in a bar-parlour,” she pursues. “When our children grow up, they will point to those marks, and think what a slattern they had for a mother.” She begins to tremble. “That’s what hurts me most, Henry. Every time I see one of those marks, I——”

“We’ll have them repolished if you feel like that. But, upon my soul——”

“That is to say,” she continues, catching her breath, “if they ever do grow up. But it’s ten chances to one that some night you’ll set fire to the house with your old pipe, and we shall all be burned

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to death, and when you find yourself alone in the world with——”

“ Hang it all, Eliza ! Why should I be the only one saved ? The pipe conflagration would probably start with me.”

“ Oh, Henry ! How can you ! ” she cries, now weeping luxuriously. “ I felt you no longer loved me as you used to do, but I never thought you would turn the loss of your wife and children into a joke.”

At this point the man does one of three things : he either slams the door with an impious exclamation and goes out, or sits down and says nothing, or pats his wife on the shoulder and remarks : “ Come, old girl, what’s gone wrong to-day ? ” But his demeanour is more or less a side-issue, and the point is that she has now enjoyed the luxury of a row and is prepared to settle down to normal conditions.

Sometimes, however, you may meet with a man who does not understand why, having kicked the cat, etc., at the office, and so satisfied his desire for a row, he should be obliged to experience the reverse side of one on his return home. And people who truly love each other have been known to quarrel and part for life because the wife indulges in this luxury, and the husband—who would cheerfully give her anything in the world—does not know that all she wants is an occasional row.

TRAVELLER'S JOY

THERE are—there *must* be, unless the world is full of liars—a large number of persons who just float like disembodied spirits from one beauty spot to another, really seeing nothing but the splendour of the way and the glory of sunrise and sunset. But I have the best reason for believing that there are also low creatures who hide their real feelings with a cunning worthy of a better cause—for I belong to that secret band.

These ignoble ones often remember nothing of certain mediæval streets, for instance, but the horrible smell ; though they pretend at the time, with overdone enthusiasm, to note fine roofs against a morning sky. And if any such should read these words, I do not expect them to own up, because that would be almost as reasonable as betraying the mysteries of freemasonry. They cannot say, straight out : “I, too, only remember a savour as of dead dog, or of cabbage water boiling over in a rat-haunted basement.”

But I have got to the stage when something stronger than myself impels me to confess. And so I will own that the most vivid recollection of my first railway journey in Spain concerns a fellow-passenger opposite : a fat gentleman who kept the window up on a burning noon and ate crayfish and cheese together without bread.. That he did so—enjoyed it—was evidently used to the experiment and still retained apparent health, seemed to exhaust my capacity for wonder.

WHAT I HAVE GATHERED

My companion pointed out cork trees. I looked at cork trees for the first time. But I saw them, and still see them, through the phantom figure of the fish-and-cheese-eater opposite.

And yet I had dreamed of Spain all my life. I had expected—or half expected—to see golden galleons and grandes and gore and glory. For weeks beforehand I had murmured in my sleep that magic letter ‘g’ which is the beginning of most glamorous words—and yet I could not rise above a little fat man gobbling crayfish perspiringly from a newspaper.

Still, soon after that I was to see in Spain almost the only thing which—in all my life—has seemed more beautiful to me than my dream of it beforehand; the Alhambra at evening being just a dream that stayed, as was Philæ : t high noon in flood time twenty years ago.

But there is an inherent contrariness about the secret band (you others have to own it), which makes us actually resent many views advertised as beautiful. We return, without willing it, to an unfortunate mood of our early youth; the mood that impelled us—when kind relations said: “See—what a lovely rocking-horse!” to lick something and reply: “Nasty old horse!” And that simply because we were swelling with admiration to a degree that made us uncomfortable. So are we equally unresponsive still, when a companion murmurs soulfully in our ear: “How exquisitely that snowclad mountain-top stands out against the sky!”

TRAVELLER'S JOY

For what we want is to be alone with beauty—which we can be in a crowd, but not with one person who will constantly direct our attention to ‘view-points.’

But the queerest thing about travel is the number of noted spots which just ordinary people with imagination must refrain from visiting. None of these can go to the Holy Land, because to make this journey successfully, a man needs either no imagination, or that of a great saint and mystic.

I have even a doubt whether the seeker after traveller's joy should visit Rome—though I say this with deep apologies to Messrs. Cook, and to all the tourists who must consider such a remark as a sort of blasphemy. I only know that the City of the Seven Hills as I first beheld it when I looked up from the enchanting but inaccurate pages of Rollin's *Ancient History*, in a room filled with the scent of sun-warmed geranium leaves, was far more glorious than anything I found when I saw it with my own eyes.

Hardest of all is this—that once you really have found traveller's joy anywhere, it is best never to go back again another year. You will find the place altered, even if it remains exactly the same—for you it will be different. To journey in search of the spirit of a past holiday is hopeless, because it can never be found in this world any more.

Another queer thing about travelling is that those who wander often on the beaten track are so different,

WHAT I HAVE GATHERED

and yet in a way so oddly alike. There is the poor English Spinster, the rich English Spinster, and the American Widow with a daughter or daughters, who may be found at every hotel on the continent of Europe ; but they are never to be seen anywhere else. It really seems as if they must hibernate in large yellow trunks, in terminus cloak-rooms, while they recover from too much over-cooked nutriment and wait for the dividends to accumulate, or the remittances to arrive. Then, at that queer hour before dawn when even stationmasters are asleep, they creep forth upon deserted platforms, and officials finding them next morning suppose them to have arrived by the night express.

There is also that other mysterious traveller who remains, during all chances and changes of locomotion, her fellow-passengers' bane. *For she grows feet in the night.* Starting with the usual two, she has four before midnight, six by three o'clock, and eight when a pale light shows that dawn is at hand. Every time a cramped passenger moves, he strikes against one of the sensible Oxford shoes of the monster, and if polite, he withdraws with apologies to sit for many hours in a cramped position. It surely would be only fair if these strange beings were obliged to wear a badge, like a kicking horse, so that the general public might beware of them. At present, their only distinguishing mark on first sight is a great aplomb, a large hand-bag, and a raw look about the neck.

Then there are people travelling to make desirable

TRAVELLER'S JOY

acquaintances, people wishing to avoid making any acquaintances, as well as the blankly indifferent; and these all form a part of th^l change which an Excursionist Age finds necessary. But those who want to see the true enjoyment of going away should watch certain married couples who may be called—for want of a better name—the Jollyboys. They are middle-aged, well-to-do, with children either at school or grown up, and they are out for fun. They like the hotel cookery. They like the band of nondescript foreigners in Italian dress upon whom they beamingly bestow silver at each round of the collecting plate. They enjoy every outing. They wholeheartedly admire everything they are told to admire. They buy no end of rubbish to take home to relatives and friends. They hire noble carriages and go forth in them early in the sunshine to return red and pleased in the evening.

Mr. Jollyboy wears a good dress suit. Mrs. Jollyboy puts on a gown of excellent material looking tighter than it is, and handsome jewellery. They rustle down to dinner as the gong strikes, and the Spirit of Holiday—perhaps avoiding you and me—rollicks along between them, holding an arm of each. Just before entering the dining-room, Mr. Jollyboy says with a chuckle: “What about a bottle of cham, Maria?” And she smiles indulgently. Put they are sober people at home, and the champagne is just a sign of a jolly day gone, with another jolly day to follow. And if there are any hotel-keepers in heaven

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—which I have the best of reasons to hope—I trust they may be rewarded for kind attention and reasonable charges here by keeping celestial inns frequented solely by Jollyboys.

But the real traveller's joy, I think, is something thought of long after and scarcely noticed at the time. A fragrance of early coffee, in a room with the Mediterranean sparkling wonderfully below the open window. A light air blowing across the flowery fields near a Sicilian temple, and in the distance a boy's voice calling. Momentary impressions which have no greater importance than a million others in our lives, but which remain to make that wonderful picture-book which we all hope to turn over as we sit by the fire when our day is getting towards evening.

THE DELIGHT OF CALLING NAMES

THIS is a joy of youth, and has to be left behind when early youth is over. But once-upon-a-time people went on gleefully calling names all their lives. So when a tall, dignified Canon Redhead, for instance, decorously enters a room, we have a flashing thought of that jolly day when his remote ancestor walked down town with auburn hair flaming, while the neighbours shouted, "Red-head! Red-head!" as he passed the corner.

Authors, however, do sometimes cling to certain kinds of fun which their neighbours have let go in obedience to the dictates of common sense; so for long after other people stopped calling names, they went on throwing them about like children let loose in an apple orchard. A bad man got the bad name he deserved, and it must have been a satisfaction to be able to label a miser Mr. Greedyguts. I know I should love to rechristen a number of people named variously Smith, De Vere, Hodge, etc., who really ought all to have one family surname.

For instance, the Prosperous Podges.

A lady of that sort may be announced as Mrs. Tennyson Browning, but to the seeing eyes there can be no possible mistake: she is a Prosperous Podge. Nearly always comfortably off for her station in life, sometimes tall, but more often rather short, and invariably clad in good clothes rather too tight. No

WHAT I HAVE GATHERED

committee in England is without one of the family, and she usually has a husband who feels proud of this solid, visible proof of his prosperity. For the strange thing is that either an embryo Mrs. Prosperous Podge never marries a poor man, or poverty affects her development like frost in June, and she wilts into one of the ordinary throng. I fancy too that she acts on her husband's fortune as a sort of preservative, and even his death does not diminish her, for as a widow she is always—if anything—more so than ever. And when she herself dies, if she has been good, I fancy she retires to some place where new corsets and light gloves are always available.

But she is not only British, she is international—and I once saw a photograph of a Pacific Island lady who naturally wore no stays or gloves at all, but only beamed fatly through a few beads, and she was quite unmistakably a Mrs. Prosperous Podge.

Another type should have been given the family name of Yelp. The most prominent members of this tribe are the males, and few of us can have attended any sort of public meeting without seeing that rather sharp-nosed gentleman, always in the opposition, who may be known to his neighbours as Finchley or Binks, but is really a Mr. Yelp.

The Pompous Smarts are equally balanced as to sex in later life, but in youth Master Pompous Smart is the more easily distinguished. He uses his smiles sparingly, dresses well, and is a little careful with whom he dances—not that his moral code is unduly

THE DELIGHT OF CALLING NAMES

rigid, but the lady must form an appropriate pendant. Later on he develops very often a concave waistcoat, a red complexion, and prominent eyes. The female of this family grows a ‘manner,’ which she then wears through life, feeling pleasantly superior to people whose manners have remained more or less invisible.

There everybody knows the Eagerly Twitters, who are, I believe, a growth of the higher civilisation, for they seem rare on quiet farms and in lonely country places. But at suburban tea-parties a Mrs. Eagerly Twitter is ever present—the sort of person who says, “Yes, yes!” intensely in the middle of a remark, laughs before the point of a funny story is reached, and always listens faster than any one can talk.

Last and dearest are the Timorous Goods, who are called by every name under heaven but this which is their own, and who never get credit for the happiness they make in the world until they have gone out of it. What a convenience it would be if they wore a halo instead of badly done hair, or a shabby bowler; for then you and I would not have to look back with an aching heart—as we must do sooner or later—wishing we had only known!

THE FUN OF BEING AN AUTHOR

AN author who enjoys writing may sometimes please other people by accident, but he can never pass on to any one else the zestful thrill he feels himself. For he alone, among the grown-up race, can recapture the lost sensation of blowing a penny trumpet in a back-yard regardless of everything but the jolly splendour of the moment.

And as in early youth the blast most akin to pig-killing created the keenest joy, so the less admired literary productions have often given the greatest happiness to the writer. Results have nothing at all whatever to do with the private fun of being an author.

There lies the answer to the problem which puzzles many wise people. Now it is plain why there are so many of us, and why we are often content to work for wages which a self-respecting charwoman would refuse with scorn.

But the public fun of being an author is rather apt to wear thin, particularly at those times when a kind, well-meaning friend comes up at a tea-party towing a victim towards the literary altar. A conversation very like this then takes place :

"This is J. E. Buckrose, you know. Of course you have read her books?"

"Well—I have not exactly read them *all*," murmurs the victim. "I read so few novels. Busy life. But of course I know the *name* well."

THE FUN OF BEING AN AUTHOR

Which is the less surprising as my name is also that of a large division of Yorkshire.

How different from my dream when I began to write, about the age of nine, and used to picture myself one day walking along the principal street of Hull with a rapt look on my face while all the passers-by watched me admiringly.

It was a most delightful dream, but my first doubt of its fulfilment arose when I became acquainted with a real, live writer of popular children's books and found her to be exactly like other people. She wore a black apron, and talked about measles. I never forgot the interview because it marked a lost illusion.

Another drawback to the literary life is the tendency of all friends and neighbours to regard themselves in the light of models. If you describe a tall lady with a hook nose and seven children, a small, fat lady in the next street will probably look cold when you go by, while some mutual friend will ask gently if it is quite *kind* to draw so faithful a picture of a person whom you see every day.

And though you protest until you are black in the face that the injured lady is fat, has a small nose and no children, and that never for one moment did your thoughts rest upon her many excellencies when writing about the hook-nosed heroine of the novel in question —you had better save your breath for some more useful purpose. For one thing is certain—no character for fair, average truthfulness will help you at all. You

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may never yet have told a lie—but nobody will believe you when you say that you haven't put persons into a book, if the idea once gets about that the crime has been committed. For after all it *is* a crime; because a writer has no more right to go into a person's life, and steal what can be found there, and expose it for sale, than to purloin the spoons at afternoon tea.

Still it is possible for this idea to become a definite barrier between a writer and sensitive neighbours, though the most afraid are the least likely to furnish inspiration. The duller a person is, the more determined he is not to be 'hit off' to make an author's livelihood.

Another trial to the author without children is the busy mother who pities women for writing books to fill an empty life. It is all right for *them*, she infers, to use up thus the creative energy which should have gone to founding a family, but for her part—And she pushes forward Bobby or Jane as though to say: "If you could have done this you wouldn't have wanted to scribble!"

To those built in a certain way, however, the joy of writing is as great and indescribable as the joy of loving. But there are—as every one knows—two kinds of writing: one coming out of your vitals and the other from the top of your head. The first is the only sort from which any true private pleasure can be gained, for it is a way of getting something out of life which seemed to be there in childhood, when childhood is quite over. It is a rest from

THE FUN OF BEING AN AUTHOR

reality—however real the things you write about. It is a place where your will is omnipotent.

And joy arises also from the outside, when a stranger sends a letter to say that some book or article has made life a little happier. This, at any rate, is what usually happens to me just when I am beginning to wonder if I am justified in spending so many hours upon the private fun of being an author, and it furnishes my dearest excuse for going on.

CHEAP WONDER

WONDER is so dear to-day that rich people will often buy it with half they possess, while in nearly every bleak farm and grey cottage between the Humber and Flamborough Head wonder costs nothing, and has not even to be sought. But there is one condition attached which a stranger cannot possibly overcome—for the wonder-finder must have been born to the sound of the grey wind that blows across the land, winter and summer, and his eyes must first have opened upon strange trees all bent and gnarled like witches at a christening.

Anybody, given that start in life, who wakes in the dead of night to hear the cock crowing, may experience that sudden hush of the soul and the strange thrill following on, which other men seek in the far corners of the world and at gruesome plays. Hearing the sound at that hour, a woman will rise on her elbow and whisper to her husband through the dark : “*I wonder who is dying?*” But as plain men do not love drama, only endure it, the husband will mutter : “Get off to sleep with you!” And yet even he will feel the passing of a cold shadow.

But the woman lies awake a long time, planning black garments in case it should be old Uncle Fewster gone at last. And when she does fall asleep, dreams not unnaturally of a funeral. But she is careful to tell her dream before breaking her fast, because to dream of a funeral signifies a marriage, and to tell

CHEAP WONDER

it on an empty stomach ensures fulfilment. Then it may happen that Uncle Fewster *has* died in the night, and also that Cousin Annie shortly becomes engaged ; and thus we are all pleasantly confirmed in our faith.

' So many warnings of disaster are connected with birds that a person of over-sensitive mind ought really to avoid keeping poultry in East Yorkshire ; a crowing hen, indeed, being such a sure indication of coming evil that one committing this misdemeanour is instantly beheaded. But execution sometimes proves unavailing, for I know once when it was done, the daughter of the house afterwards said quite simply to me : " We killed her, though she was a good 'un, but grandfeyther died at nine o'clock all the same." The story sounds ridiculous enough, but at the time it made the old man in the cottage doorway, and the evil hen fluttering past, and Sudden Death hovering, all as plain and yet mysterious as an ancient woodcut.

So a bird driven by the storm with a rustle and thud against the window-pane will cause those inside by the warm fire to shudder and start and poke the flames higher, because it *may* be—no one quite believes this—but it may be some soul lost on the way from earth to heaven trying to come in.

Magpies met in a road may be a sign of good or evil according to number, but a bird of any sort flying into the house is an unpleasant omen, while three pigeons together upon a house-

WHAT I HAVE GATHERED

rigg are a certain warning of death. Altogether the superstitions still surviving are so often connected with feathered creatures that one would like to know why this should be, but no reason seems forthcoming.

The indications of good luck, on the whole, appear to carry less conviction than those of disaster, but a wise man who wants a prosperous year will turn the money in his pocket (if he has any) on seeing the first lambs of the season. Women curtsy to the new moon in January if they wish to conciliate the fates, but they must not look through glass at the clear sickle in the frosty sky.

I myself—though I have a little lost my heritage—came back to it again one evening the summer before last. It was just about dark and I was driving in a dogcart beside a fat farmer who looked the embodiment of ordinary common sense. We were on a grass road where everything seemed very silent, and as we passed a white farm gate, dim in the twilight, a light air must have caught it on the balance and it swung to and fro. The farmer, pulling up, pointed with a solemn finger at the gate. “Look,” he said, “it’ll be Tom Barker gone. I heard he was very bad.”

So we drove home in a sort of reverent silence, decently mourning for Tom Barker, whose soul had just gone through the gate which his toil-worn hands had so often opened.

It was in a sense a great disappointment to find

CHEAP WONDER

afterwards that he had lived until the following Sunday. But the hush of the grey fields that evening, with the farmer pointing to the dim white gate as it swung silently back and forth, will always seem to me like the passing of a soul.

THE DARKNESS OF A CHILD

WHEN you are little the dark is not a condition, it is a thing. And it is an enemy. Only when childhood has passed can people begin to make friends with the quiet dark.

But it is so very strange that a child may lie awake every night for weeks and even months without being afraid ; then, suddenly, for no reason at all, the dark grows alive with terror.

If you go back for a moment into the world of a child—you grown-ups reading this—you will find that you remember everything about it. So you will understand what happened to a little girl called Jane when she also, for no reason at all, began to be afraid. At first she tried to hide from her own fear and crept low down under the bedclothes. But though she could not see the dark now, she could feel it—the horror of it crept closer, hung over her. She lay quivering under the bedclothes, desperately afraid.

Then one of those strange noises which are heard in the still, black night and never in the day, sounded loudly from the interior of the big wardrobe, and Jane sat bolt upright, startled and staring.

“Pop !” went something in the corner near the washstand.

“Cra—•a—ack !” went the chest of drawers. And it was as if a ghostly minute-gun had been fired to salute all sorts of horrors.

THE DARKNESS OF A CHILD

Jane thought of those tales which are read to children because nobody knows of the fear they leave behind, and of the queer pictures in the fairy-books, and the vague stories of burglars and ghosts that nurse sometimes talked about when she had been reading the newspaper—all these crowded round Jane until at last she gave a little whimpering cry and jumped out of bed.

It was with the dark itself she wrestled as she dragged panting at the door, and that alone seemed to be pursuing her as she fled down the lighted staircase towards the sound of human voices.

It was a crime impossible at safer moments—to burst in upon a grown-up dinner-party in a night-dress; but Jane thought nothing of that as she stood, dazed and trembling, but safe, within the gaily-lighted room where the dreadful dark could not follow her.

For a breathing-space that was enough, but the familiar place seemed so different at this hour, filled with gaily-dressed people, that the queerest sense of strangeness came over her as she stood by the door in her nightdress. It frightened her almost as much as the dark. Then :

“Jane!” gasped an aunt near the door.

“My darling—are you ill?” cried her mother, springing up and running to yards her. “What is it?”

Jane looked from one to the other with a sort of desperate entreaty in her eyes.

WHAT I HAVE GATHERED

"I'm so sorry. I was afraid of the dark."

"Ridiculous!" said the aunt. "We always used to sleep without a light."

"Come, Jane!" said Mother gently. "I will take you back to bed. It is babyish to be afraid of the dark, you know."

"Shall you stay with me?" said Jane in a low voice, turning an anxious, eager face as they walked across the room.

"No, I can't, dear," answered Mother. "You must behave like a good girl."

Jane glanced back at the grown-ups, all safe in that lighted room. Was there not one who could understand?

That look met the careless glance of a fat lady on the sofa, and something stirred inside of her, so that for one second she, too, was a child afraid of the dark. "Here!" she said, speaking in a rich, booming voice. "Let her come and sit by me."

"I really think the child had better—" began Mother, but she was silenced by a wave of a large dimpled hand.

And for a while Jane sat on the lady's knee, feeling so safe with that comfortable mountain of flesh billowing about her; then she put up a little brown finger to touch the diamonds which blazed upon her friend's chest.

"How did you remember when the others didn't?" she whispered.

And the lady, looking down over three chins at little

THE DARKNESS OF A CHILD

Jane, replied confidentially : " I expect it is because I have never really grown up inside."

Jane just waited a moment, then threw back her head and peal after peal of clear laughter rippled through the room.

" Not grown up ! "

It really was such a glorious, outrageous joke that she forgot all about the dark.

Or thought she did. •For no one can really forget that moment when the dark, for no reason at all, grows suddenly terrible.

BROKEN ENGAGEMENTS

A BROKEN engagement may be a farce—but it is more often a tragedy with a comic mask. It sounds funny to hear of a girl enfolding her lover in a hideous muffler of her own manufacture as she bids him farewell at 8.45 with many warnings about his delicate throat, while another young man waits round the corner to elope with her at 9.15. But among the most vivid recollections of my life is the sequel to just that happening. If I could do justice to it—for all three persons are now dead—I should be able to write a most engrossing novel reaching the very depths of human suffering and disillusion. And all from the effect of that rather farcical affair, a broken engagement, upon the mind of a young man.

Quite otherwise, of course, is the temporary engagement. It is like piecrust, only made to be broken, and should be given a less dignified name—as it is in our village—where those love-making for sport are said to be ‘walking out,’ and are not placed in the same category as those who are really pledged to marry. There are men and girls only ‘walking out’ in all grades of society who lightly bestow upon that amusement the beautiful title of a betrothal; but this should no more be permitted to a Lady Ermintrude than to a Betsy Jane. Then we should know where we were, and the promise of a man and a maid would recover its old sacredness.

BROKEN ENGAGEMENTS

The greatest problem of all, however, has to be faced occasionally by those who become engaged and then discover that they have made a mistake. They may find out suddenly, as if a lantern flashed in a dim place ; or little by little, on many occasions not necessarily consecutive. But the result is the same in the end—either the man or the girl realises that they have ceased to be in love.

I think this happens far more frequently than any one knows, and that if the secrets of all married hearts could be read by a sort of mental X-ray—which is mercifully not yet possible—a good many happy unions would be rendered miserable by the discovery that either the husband or wife had ‘gone through with it’ simply for fear of behaving badly to the other partner who still remained in love. A man particularly—if he is a man worth having—will, in nine cases out of ten, marry a girl to whom he has become indifferent rather than deal such a cruel blow to her love and pride.

Undoubtedly marriages of this sort do turn out happily. If the man is the one who has changed, he may feel sorry that he cannot give his wife what he has led her to give him, and generosity makes him kind and forbearing at first, until perhaps her devotion begets real love in him. But he must be of sterling stuff and not an egoist for such a thing to happen. Equally, a woman in the same position must have real tenderness and strength of character, or her indifference will harden into actual dislike. All of which

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shows that it is a decidedly risky experiment, however fine the motive may be.

Then, if an engagement *has* to be broken off, how should it be done ?

Should both be obviously weary, the thing is simple enough, but the trouble is to know what the other side is feeling about the affair. Take, for instance, a girl and a man who were engaged when she was twenty-one and he twenty-six. After nine and a half years, during which she had accumulated nineteen small pieces of jewellery, bestowed on each birthday and at Christmas, they were still engaged. On the evening of her thirty-first birthday, they went out for a stroll on the cliff together, as usual ; as usual, also, he produced his little leather case. She looked at it for a moment or two. "The twentieth ! " she said.

"Well, that is not my fault—I had to help my mother," he stammered hastily, snatching at the well-worn excuse.

"You've forgotten," she said. "Your mother died last year."

"Yes, yes ! It's business—business is so bad, prospects so uncertain ; not fair to you."

She put the little case back into his hand.

"I'll let you have the rest to-morrow," she said. "Don't make a fuss. You don't care for me any longer."

Upon which he began to feel that he did, for long habit had made her a part of his life ; but she saw clearer, and gave a little laugh.

BROKEN ENGAGEMENTS

" My dear soul," she said, " I'm dead sick of it, too ; but I only realised it all of a sudden when I saw the bi-annual leather case in your hand."

Perhaps she spoke the truth. If she did, this instance is an exception, for mostly somebody has to be hurt, and there is no agreeable way of destroying another person's happiness. One thing only is certain—any man or girl who wants to break off their engagement and does it by letter, is not only cruel—which can't be helped ; but a coward—which can. To retire to a safe distance where the agony caused by the blow cannot be seen, and from thence to write and say that all is over, may be easy, but it is also despicable. Certainly those who no longer love are wiser to part, but the least that the one who is the cause of the parting can do is to bear the undoubted humiliation and pain of that horrible half-hour.

Still of course there must be deviations from every general rule, and I think a girl might be excused for writing such a letter to a bully, or a man to the sort of female limpet who will cling on, whatever happens, until explanations end at the altar steps.

Those of maturer years who would treat a broken engagement as a trivial thing have either forgotten youth, or age has brought them no knowledge of human nature, for all who look about them must know that such severing is agony, and that it leaves the natural instincts, now fully roused, in a state of constant dissatisfaction. After a while the strong

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of heart will cease to feel those prickings of wounded vanity which are what make the wound fester, and will become whole again—though with a difference. Then if they meet some one else whom they can love, their feelings will only be deepened by what has passed; while if they remain alone, their outlook will be broadened by their experience—unless they embalm their memories with that bitterness which causes dead things to keep a hideous look of life.

But there is no *kind* way of breaking off an engagement—for while nearly every way of falling in love is kind, every way of getting out of love is cruel.

DEPRESSION

THERE is this difference between depression and sorrow—sorrowful, you are in great trouble because something matters so much; depressed, you are miserable because nothing really matters.

So when those who have suffered in this way chance to hear one woman say cheerfully to another: "Oh, my dear, I feel so terribly depressed. Do come in with me and have an ice," they see quite well that the speaker is only using exaggerated words to describe what our great-grandmothers called the spleen.

Further, those who know what real depression is, cannot always feel sympathetic when they call on a friend whom they find seated by the fire with an expression of wistful melancholy on her face and an obvious desire to confide in any chance-comer that the gilt is off the gingerbread. Such a woman may be sincere when she says she is depressed—but as a plain matter of fact she is enjoying herself.

It is indeed surprising what a number of people really do enjoy this frame of mind, because they can centre all their thoughts and emotions in themselves and yet feel vaguely superior. But before you or I begin to make fun of such-like, we might perhaps as well give a thought to the many occasions on which we ourselves have mistaken a disordered liver for a disciplined soul.

For though there seems at first sight to be no

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danger in such an attitude, I have no hesitation at all in saying that it is as insidiously unsafe as taking drugs. Any woman who really enjoys that first comfortable sensation of being a little sadder and a little finer-souled than her neighbours will want to experience it again soon. She will encourage it by reading books which are set in a minor key—which is not to say that she will peruse the great tragedies, because, despite their painfulness, those are mostly in the major key, and do not express the attitude which suits the self-satisfied despoiler—and she will cease to try and ‘sit upon’ those occasional low spirits from which we all suffer.”

But I believe that nobody who once begins to look round can fail to observe that a very great many people in these days simply wallow in a state of mind which they call depression, but which is only the path which may lead to it later on. Once they are in it, they will know. For Burton spoke true when he said : “ If there is a hell on earth, it is to be found in a melancholy man’s heart.” And the very awfulness of that dark hour must make all who have experienced it feel impatient with those who walk carelessly of being ‘depressed’ if it chances to be a dull morning. I firmly believe that more women between the ages of forty-five and fifty-five have drifted into nervous breakdown through being weakened in their resistance to melancholia by a sitting-before-the-fire-and-enjoying-it attitude towards what is sheer disgruntledness, than from any other cause. They like the

DEPRESSION

slight irritation of the emotions, and they have no idea of the danger in front of them.

For true depression is a terribly real thing. Some of the noblest men and women in the world have been prone to it, but I do not think that they have ever been proud of it. And those cast in a lesser mould who also have this tendency know that it comes like a black cloud out of nowhere, enveloping them in a fog which they fight against in vain and are utterly unable to see their way through. They may have no reason for feeling more unhappy at that particular period than at any other. Their worldly circumstances may be just what they have been for a long time past, and perfectly satisfactory. But there suddenly closes down on them a fog of the mind which exaggerates and distorts everything, so that they see mice like men walking and ant-hills like Mount Everest. No one can be condemned for feeling like this, any more than they can be blamed for getting the toothache, because both are real and not imaginary forms of suffering.

Those who have lived some time in the world must be aware that every night thousands of men and women lie awake—especially about that bad hour, three o'clock—either trying to fight their way through the fog or simply enduring it. They think of pleasant things, they count up to enormous numbers—they may—like the old York-nirewoman—pray to God.

Perhaps it is worth while telling about that, in her own words. “I felt that dowly,” she told me, “that

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I was fit to end myself. And I prayed : ‘ O Lord, cheer me up ! O Lord, cheer me up ! ’ But He didn’t. So I lays back again and says to myself it was all no good. And then—after a bit—the dowliness shifted. He was just taking His time.”

How many alone in the night have prayed as she did, and felt nobody was listening, and after a while experienced the strange lightness which tells them the fog has gone.

But if nobody can altogether avoid depression, there is one test which all can apply to themselves in regard to this feeling—and a very simple one : “ Do I fight it and hate it ? Or do I rather enjoy it ? ” If the former, we shall suffer greatly, as did King David of Israel—who has described this state of mind with a nearer understanding. I think, than any other writer whose works are preserved for us—but we shall still remain sane, happy-hearted, with our capacity for usefulness unimpaired.

But individuals who pamper their melancholy destroy their resisting power and permanently distort their outlook upon life. Those who cannot follow the cry : “ I am utterly cast down,” with the song of hope and victory, have lost all that makes life worth living.

The woman who likes to be by herself in order that she may brood over her depression and enjoy a perverse pleasure in the pricks and stings which every morbid thought will bring home to her, is on a very dangerous road, though she may be lucky enough to

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get turned back by some great upheaval in her life before she reaches that most melancholy end.

So while real sorrow—as we all know—must be a frequent cause of depression, it is for us to separate our depression and our grief, *after a while*, from each other. We must go on sorrowing for those we love, but we must beware how we indulge that other subsidiary feeling, which is not grief, until it becomes a habit of the mind. And though at first we must endure depression, that will pass if we are on our guard, leaving only sorrow behind—the good sorrow which is a part of the rich experience of life.

'REAL YORKSHIRE'

ALL through history the feasts of mankind have had a place no less important than battles, revolutions, and crusades. So I will not make apology for saying that a Yorkshire tea at Christmas-time follows modestly at the tail-end of a procession which includes the memorable banquet during which Cleopatra drank the pearl, and that other, more homely one, when our own King Henry achieved the same object in a less picturesque manner.

Those who prophesy feats of reason accompanied by assorted tabloids tell us that a hundred years hence a real Yorkshire tea will be a thing of the past over which antiquaries will dispute. Therefore I want to put on record a description which may perhaps seem no less fabulous in course of time than do tales of stewed nightingales' tongues to this generation.

To begin with, there is sugar-cured ham at the top of the table; the pork-pie, so golden brown outside with its pattern of pastry leaves, and so firm and luscious inside, with clear, savoury jelly filling up the crannies, that the pale imitations called pork-pies elsewhere seem really a sort of insult; the spiced loaf, cut thin and buttered with the freshest of fresh butter; the Christmas cake in the centre, made last October at latest and growing richer and richer in its dark solitude ever since; flakey mince-pies bursting with dried fruits and apples and spices; home-made bread; hot Sally Lunn tea-cakes that

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come in later, all hot and hot, making everybody, however full, find room for one bit more—and this no fancy picture, but just as I myself have seen it on many, many Christmasses.

And hovering over all is the aromatic fragrance of the evergreens that mingles with scent of the log burning in the open fire-grate ; the host’s hearty voice urging you to have another slice of ham ; the hostess signing through the jolly babel with a silver jug of cream in her hand, so thick that it will hardly pour, wanting to know if your teacup is empty yet. Oh ! I can imagine no worse punishment for a greedy villain than to sit at a table spread with a Yorkshire Christmas tea, while he gnaws digestive biscuits for ever and ever.

This evening meal is called ‘Tea,’ unqualified ; but the meal served in more degenerate families at four o’clock is fairly splendid too, particularly at this time of year. And I shall never forget an incident in this connection which happened to me in my early youth, when I was taken to call at a great house in London at this season. I was very short, very young, and very unsophisticated, while the entrance would easily have swallowed up our Parish Hall at home, and the staircase was overwhelming. I sat tongue-tied, until two magnificent footmen brought in the tea, when, strangely enough, I immediately became myself again. For the fact was, that I felt it simply ridiculous to remain hot about the head, and shaky about the knees, in a house where they set a tea like that before

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you at Christmas-time. And so, during the rest of the visit, I was enabled to discourse at my ease—nibbling a despicable scrap of bread and butter the while—on Shakespeare and the musical glasses.

It is true that no human being in the world is more generous in feeding her friends and neighbours than a genuine Yorkshirewoman ; and yet, when it comes to money, she thinks twice before parting. She can and does give generously, but neither in the cause of charity nor in any other way does she ‘ chuck money about.’ The long generations during which men and women in this bleak climate wrestled with the forces of nature for a living have left their mark, even on such modern descendants as earn their bread and butter in some less arduous way. They know the value of money.

At least, the real Yorkshire folk do. There is, of course, a froth left by the great upheaval which remains ignorant, but that will settle in time and become a part of the whole. It simply exists here as everywhere else, and with that we are not concerned. We are considering what belongs and lasts, and prominent among such subjects is the peculiar kind of humour which gives flavour to the whole of a woman’s life in this part of the world. It does not consist in ‘ cracking jokes,’ but in an attitude of mind which is constantly coming out in the conversation of those who are a little too old to have had their speech dulled by the perverted ambition to ‘ talk fine,’

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which grew so tremendously among girls and women during the war.

No one can help deplored such a change in our characteristic speech, for the abstraction of words and expressions which have grown to suit people and land during long centuries, seems somehow to take a certain virility from the outlook— as if the salt were to go out of the sea air blowing across Holderness.

I had occasion not so long since to witness the contrast between a stout, faded woman of forty who had sold her North-country accent for an artificial jargon which she thought elegant ‘South-country talk,’ and a countrywoman of the same age. The former was attired in a fashion too young for her appearance, and she obviously condescended to her old school-fellow in a shabby skirt and blouse who was feeding chickens. “It really appears quite funny that we should have been at school together,” giggled the fine lady archly. “My husband could not credit it. I wonder what *can* have made such a difference between us?”

The countrywoman gave a shake to the poultry corn in her bowl: “Oh, you’ve stopped young a bit ower long—that’s all,” she replied.

But I myself—to be candid—was less aware of this quality of Yorkshire humour than I ought to have been when I first married, considering that I was born and bred in Holderness. At that time there was a certain woman local preacher in our village, and when I went to hear her, I did so with a feeling that I was

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doing a rather gracious act. This no doubt showed through my greeting to the preacher next day, when I tactfully said I had been pleased with her sermon.

"Ay," she replied, "I'm glad to hear you found grace last night. You wasn't the only one. We had old Betty Mawker singing and praising God, and *she's* fought everybody as'll fight with her down Sleep's Lane. You never know who'll come in."

I walked on—humbler, and I hope wiser.

But there is another point about Yorkshirewomen which strangers never learn until too late—I mean the contempt and dislike that is fe't for any one who is even remotely suspected of 'setting herself up.' Those, therefore, belonging to other parts of the country, who come among us with a Bishop or a Baronet in their families had better be careful. We are human, and so the great impress us as they do all the rest of mankind ; but it has to be done gently—the Bishop leaking out by means of casual photographs on the mantelpiece, and the Baronet introduced under the disguise of a pamphlet.

I am aware some will dispute this, but it is true of real Yorkshire folk all the same ; and I know from my own experience of a very nice, humble-minded little woman whom nobody liked for a long time, simply because she talked a great deal to her first batch of callers about a cousin who had recently married an Earl. It was natural enough, because the world in which she had lived before turned round, as you may say, upon cousins to the third and fourth degree. But

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few of us had relations in the peerage, and it was not considered the thing.

But all this is only fine-weather talk. Let any storm of trouble come, and everything is blown clean away out of a real Yorkshirewoman's mind save the desire to give practical help and comfort. Such will turn out at night, without a thought of their own goodness, to help in nursing a sick child ; they will go without little luxuries themselves to give to a neighbour ; they will remain at home from a party to have a ' nice tea ' for a widow who is lonely and unhappy. These sound small things, but they are not—and no woman who has spent her days here and has known sorrow can have failed at some time to thank God she lives in Yorkshire.

In conclusion, a Yorkshireman or woman may say they hate Yorkshire—may deride our customs—abuse our climate—openly long for Bournemouth or Mentone ; may, even, live in Bournemouth or Mentone ; but, so long as they have that feeling when they say : "I come from Yorkshire," as if drums were beating somewhere and there were flags waving in the air—well, they're 'real Yorkshire' still !

THE WEATHER

“ Oh, love is like the weather!
Though we abuse,
We always choose
To talk of it together.”

THE reason being plain enough, that we have to think of both subjects every day of our waking lives.

At least so long as we are in the world, we cannot forget love, though we may imagine that we have done so ; and while we dwell in England we are forced to consider the weather.

It is by now a platitude to find fault with our climate, but perhaps that very uncertainty has a great deal to do with our keen zest in living. We have the constant slight stimulus of wondering what the next day will be like, and if it is fine we rejoice, while rain and grey skies make us hope for better weather tomorrow, or, at worst, create a contrast, giving value to the sunshine.

This is not a remark made at random to comfort dwellers in our foggy island, but the result of personal experience. For the only time in my life when I was able to disregard the weather, my feelings progressed in this fashion. First, I was delighted to awake each morning to the blue sky reflected in the waters of the Nile. Then, some time during the second month, I gradually ceased to be pleased with a fine day because it was only what I expected, and by the end of the fourth I began to long with all my senses for a grey

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English sky, with wet primroses peeping out of the green hedge-bottoms.

That is some years ago, however, and I believe irrigation has brought Egypt more or less into line with Western notions in the matter of weather as in everything else. .

But what we at home most fail to admire in our own climate, though we soon learn to appreciate it when we go away, is the clean, delightful, reposeful absence of things that buzz and sting and crawl, and flop against walls in the dark, and drop down horribly from ceilings. We may—in this cool and favoured land—be subject to fog and drizzle: but after all, what is that compared with never being safe from the attentions of some busy little brother of mankind? I do not blame a flea for biting, or a hairy spider for flopping, because it is as much their nature to, as it is yours and mine to eat our meat from a plate; but I must own that I prefer to reside in a climate which they find trying.

Apart from this general aspect of the question, nearly everybody has their own private idea of what forms perfect weather. Some enjoy a good stiff breeze off the sea with bright sunshine—the sort of day that makes those living on the east coast of Yorkshire feel for a few hours as if they could conquer the world. So even if they do come home eventually to a cold in the head and a deranged liver, they find it worth while. My own personal predilection is different, for I always picture heaven as a place where

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there is no wind. I even like what is called here a ‘sea roke,’ when the air is quite still, and there is a salt mist covering the world which makes passers-by look like trees walking, while sounds that are really near seem then to be travelling strangely and with a queer distinctness from a long way off.

But the best thing which comes to those of us who live in the country, from our changeable weather, is that form of words which I always call in my own mind, *The Wayfarer’s Litany*. This consists of greetings which used to be heard in every country lane when I was a child, but now passers-by say them more and more rarely, and soon they will be forgotten. So I will put them down now in order that I may refresh my own memory before the impression loses its sharpness. The first portion belonged to the early hours of a rainless day, on which, when you met any one before noon, whether you knew them or not, you said cheerfully: “*Fine morning!*” To which the other replied: “*Ay; fine morning for the time of year!*” And this greeting between two strangers was just a way of giving thanks to the Creator of green fields and sunshine—though neither was aware of it, of course.

After twelve o’clock you began instinctively to repeat the next words set down in your mind: “*Pleasant day!*” Upon which the one meeting you would stop whistling as he led his horses, to answer back: “*Ay; grand weather for the hay!*”—or for the harvest, or the school-treat, as it might happen to be.

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Then, when the sun began to slant downwards, you might see Long Jim driving cows towards the pasture, and he would call out : “ *Beautiful night !* ” To which somebody else would answer from a distance : “ *Ay, beautiful night !* ” And the sound of those words, and the golden light on the summer hedge-rows, and the peaceful little noises of the sheep cropping the short grass, would enter the heart to stay there when many other things were forgotten.

At any rate, I know one to whom this happened, and she would not change a single line of the Wayfarer’s Litany for months of cloudless weather.

But people in bad health cannot enjoy the bracing effect of these sudden variations of climate experienced by all who live in these islands, and indeed in Europe ; therefore many are forced to feel a little unhappy when they wake up to a gloomy day. They are not, however, to be confused with the soulful grumbler who will tell you with pride : “ I can’t help being dreadfully influenced by the weather. I was always so from a child. A grey morning affects my temper.” And they eat their breakfast with a scowl, obviously thinking what a very superior soul theirs must be, and looking down from a height of gloom upon their neighbour consuming bacon with a cheerful countenance. The plain fact, however, is this—any fool can be depressed by mist and weeping grey skies, but it takes a little wisdom to see wonder and beauty in all kinds of weather.

There everybody who has ever been on a holiday

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must have heard the Universal Weather Lie, because it is common to every part of the world where men travel for pleasure. We all know, of course, that it added another to the long list of oft-told stories about St. Peter, in which he found a wistful little man hanging about rather forlornly inside the gate of heaven, and asked what the newcomer lacked. "I suppose it is always like this here?" said the man, as he looked at the cloudless sky. "Being heaven, it has to be. But if it *could* have drizzled a bit, and you *could* have come up to me saying the bad weather was quite exceptional, and you'd never known anything like it before at this season, in all the years you'd lived here—well, I should feel more as if I were going to enjoy myself, somehow. You see, my holidays always began like that at home."

And the story goes that dear St. Peter gently shook a flowering tree so that the heavenly dews fell on the little man's face, and he went forward bravely to meet his bliss, feeling less strange. I don't say this is true—but I do say it seems like St. Peter.

'IT-ERY'

WHEN we say that a person thinks himself 'it,' we use slang; but we do also convey a delicate shade of meaning which has hitherto eluded language. For if we were to say 'conceited,' that is at once too little and too much, while the word 'snobbish' is no less inexact.

The truth is that the quality we want to describe has not quite emerged from that cloudy mass of nameless things by which we are surrounded, and until some lucky individual hits on the right word, perhaps 'it-ery' may serve.

At any rate, the discovery of a name will not be delayed for want of opportunity, because our streets, theatres, shops, churches, back alleys, and Houses of Parliament all contain numbers of people suffering from this insidious malady. They don't know it, of course—for a complete ignorance of anything amiss is one of the symptoms. Another, even more strongly marked and easily detected, is the strange delusion that the sufferer ranks a cut above the level of ordinary human beings.

But the worst feature of this complaint is that it can so easily infect quite healthy people. No intelligent, receptive person who frequents the society of those suffering from 'it-ery' can possibly escape contagion unless they are on their guard, and have a strong sense of humour—that best disinfectant against all the diseases of the mind.

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Sometimes even those who escape are the subjects of a queer, indirect indisposition—like contracting a sore throat when nursing diphtheria. It takes the peculiar though less dangerous form of admiring sufferers from ‘it-ery’ and then trying to simulate the outward manifestations of the disease. For instance, I called the other day on a woman whom I have always known to be simple and kind, with a quiet dignity of her own. To my surprise she wore a manner slightly artificial and arrogant, though cordial, and I detected at once infallible signs in her very way of handling the teapot. For the moment I was puzzled—until I remembered that she had joined a Club where ‘it-ery’ has so permeated the very walls and sofas that a mental sanitary inspector ought to be called in.

But let not one of us think she is immune ; for later on in life, between fifty and sixty, this becomes one of the dangerous maladies from which the soul can suffer. It deafens the ears to the sorrows of others ; it blinds judgment ; it destroys fineness of spirit.

I suppose most of us have met some female friend after a lapse of years, and have become conscious of an indefinable change which has nothing to do with ill-health, or saddened spirits, or fatness, or grey hair, but is simply an attitude of the mind. The woman we used to like so much has developed what we call in Yorkshire ‘a set on her’ ; which is a sort of artificial dignity, prompted by a desire to claim what the world may no longer offer her ; and it involves the loss of

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that spontaneity of manner which once was hers, and which she now instinctively discards lest she should get pushed aside by other ladies with more 'it-ery' about them.

And here—though reluctantly—I have to own that she proves herself to be in the right. It is just a question of gain and loss which each individual *must* decide, for if the malady is infectious at all times, it is virulently so about middle age. I defy almost any woman of sensitive perceptions, over forty, to go out to lunch with three others of her own sex who are friendly, well-fed, and suffering from 'it-ery' to escape without contracting a slight attack. This attack may pass off during the next twenty-four hours, given favourable circumstances, but it is not a thing to neglect. For it is really very serious; because this indefinable something which women seem to put on in order to make themselves *felt*, when they naturally fear they may no longer *attract*, seems to poison the whole system. Such unconscious invalids may perhaps be listened to with more deference on Committees, and strange shop-assistants may accord them more attention, while even their own family circle may be impressed. But at what a great expense! At the cost of youth in the heart.

Men are most prone to this disease in their very early years, and they often completely recover. Perhaps the attacks 'come out' so well—as in a successful measles *rash*—that the system is cleared. This seems rather probable when you notice the young

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when he first falls in love. All the other creatures inhabiting earth and air and sea seem to have the pull over him in this respect, for they are then at their best, and are able to put on bright colours, or sing their choicest songs, or at the very least to assume a conquering air in order to impress the lady.

It is reserved for man—the lord and master of all—to appear ridiculous on this occasion. And the deeper a boy is in love, the more awkward he will be, while even such harmless and usually quiescent articles as tables and chairs seem to take on a malicious liveliness and combine to make him look foolish.

But this stage, though full of reality as well as glamour, can only last for a little while—simply because it is only under twenty-five that people fall in love. Afterwards they meet with love, or they rush head-first into love, or in some other way they become lovers; but they do not suddenly find themselves in the enchanted valley without knowing how they got there, with everything so utterly strange that they cannot believe any one has been exactly in this same spot before, and think this miraculous valley is their own and they will live in it for ever and ever.

But when they have been turned out once, and have found a way by which they can return, they say to themselves with half-ashamed surprise: “Why, here we are again!” So this time they come to love knowing all about it, fully aware that both they themselves and the beloved can get away—and

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this gives an urgency, a fire, which they had not before.

Some have thought that the best way to be happy is to forget the way out, or to pretend it has never been used. They *will* believe that true love must necessarily last for ever. But they cannot make this true by ignoring the gate, I think; only by looking straight at it and exercising the free will which alone gives value to faithfulness.

Falling in love, indeed, accounts for a very small number of marriages, as compared with the common process of seeing a suitable partner in the offing and deliberately suggesting—after the method of M. Coué: “I am in love with So-and-so. From day to day, in every respect, I am more and more in love with So-and-so.”

The result is often extremely successful, and we arrange things in this fashion because we are English, and therefore romantic, and we cannot bring ourselves to accept the marriage of convenience.

At any rate, a great many estimable people are able in this way to make or accept a proposal with the due amount of self-respect and romantic satisfaction, though it has been entirely suggested by money suitability, or a desire for a home, in the first instance.

Such a man or woman will deny indignantly and with perfect conviction that they were ever actuated by any motive less elevated than pure affection; at least, they will do so, unless—as sometimes happens

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—the love comes afterwards. Then they may acknowledge with a happy smile that they were not a bit in love when they married.

Another method, most prevalent a short time ago, but always known, I suppose, among civilised peoples, is that of dancing into love. I do not refer to agile performances on polished floors—though it is often done that way—but to an attitude of mind. Thus a young man and a girl will signal to each other, in effect : “I say ! It’s a lark to be in love ! Are you on ?” And will join hands with no more real thought for the future, and no deeper sense of the meaning of the words they use, than a couple of butterflies in the sunlight.

All the same, a fair number of these young people soon find themselves in the very midst of a tremendous tragi-comedy, rather to their dismay ; and it is lucky for them that true love often follows fancy, like apples the blossom in an orchard.

But the hardest lot is theirs, who marry young, mistaking the first prompting of natural instinct, or a good-natured pleasure in being loved, for the real thing ; only to come upon love afterwards—as one comes round a dark corner upon snowclad mountains in the sunrise. Such men and women as these have experience, and they are bound to know what has happened to them. But if, already united to one who trusts them and is faithful, what can they do ? The best of them can but remain true to the husband or wife whom they took of their own free will, because

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to do otherwise would be to throw dirt into the well of which we all must drink. They form part of that glorious company which guards the well for generations still unborn.

Very different from these are the individuals, both male and female, who 'bestow their affections.' It sounds a horrid thing to do, and one would not desire to speak highly of it—but the simple fact remains that marriages thus arranged are at least as successful as the average. A man who chooses his wife in this way will somehow manage to make her feel obliged in nine cases out of ten; and equally, the woman who takes a husband as a favour and allows him to see she has done it for his good rather than with any idea of personal gratification, may keep him in an attitude of adoration during the whole of her married life. And this, while she is selfish, lazy, egotistical, and possibly a *malade imaginaire*. Such are the miracles of matrimony.

Then we are all familiar with the spectacle of couples who amble into love. They are never in such a hurry that they cannot look where they are going, and take each step with an easy precision. A first meeting creates a favourable impression, after which follow—in due course and with proper intervals—warmer approval; desire to meet more frequently; pleasure in finding the original impression maintained; a closer pressure of the hand at parting; a little note for which there is no real necessity; the loan of a book; marked attention from the male at some public

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gathering ; flattered appreciation on the part of the female ; a triumphant engagement.

Everybody can see them ambling towards the blissful goal, and if they reach it—as they certainly do—with less of ‘sweet distress’ than their neighbours, they have often a greater prospect of lasting contentment.

At the other end of the pole is the woman—very common in these days—who declares with vehement sincerity that she does not intend to fall in love. For it is only natural that all this talk about the dearth of sufficient men to go round should make a high-spirited girl say in effect : “ Well, *I* don’t compete. Any fool that can’t get on without a husband may have my share ! ” And if such an one does go down before the great conqueror, she surrenders fighting.

In spite of all this, however, a great many girls and young men still dream themselves into a state of mind which they call falling in love, though it has no more resemblance to the real thing than a puddle to Lake Maggiore at sunset. But they have a high moral standard together with a great deal of unused emotion, so they let dreaming do. Such as these sacrifice themselves for the common good of civilisation—as well as the men and women who love too late and yet remain faithful—and they are set above our pity for that reason.

Still we may honour and understand even the ageing girl who worships a lecturer, or the tired little typist who raves about a popular actor, or the clerk who

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secretly adores a post-card beauty, because we know well enough that but for the accident of circumstance, you and I might be doing just the same.

Lastly there are those others who were widowed unknown to themselves, while still playing with dolls in the nursery ; and their sacrifice is none the less tremendous because they did not know it was being made. They have lost their chance of what is, after all, the greatest thing in the world for a woman—a happy and legitimate union with a husband whom she can love, and though no visible memorial can ever be raised to honour them, I think one should be there, unseen, in the heart of every happily married woman.

ON BORES

THERE is one fundamental law of Nature in this connection which those who have lived some time in the world are bound to observe—a bore can never stand a bore. And no wonder. For when two of them get together, the most stimulating atmosphere must become heavy, and I myself have seen the sparkle taken out of an April morn^g on the Mediterranean by such a juxtaposition.

But—though this seems an odd thing to say—a good many people do not really know what a bore is ; and they state in general terms that they find Mrs. Brown tiresome because she is such a talker, or Mr. Black a wet-blanket because he scarcely opens his mouth excepting to eat, thinking they have said everything. Silence, however, will not be a proof that a man is a bore—unless it comes from a foolish sense of superiority.

For of course those who ‘smile superior’ continuously and of set purpose until it becomes a habit, must develop into that most intolerable bore who waits to speak until he thinks he has something to say worth saying. And every one knows that is not really what he wants—his true aim being, to wait until he has something to say which will impress his hearers and give them his valuation of his own cleverness.

Men and women who are silent by nature may not be exhilarating social companions ; they may at times

ON BORES

be dull to live with ; but they are not *bores*. Their company, on the contrary, may be exactly fitted to those of more expansive disposition who are apt to give out and give out until they are mentally and spiritually exhausted, and have not enough left in them of that sort of vitality without which nobody is safe in a world of sudden demands.

One of the most delightful women I know has never actually conversed in my presence during all the years of our acquaintance ; but when she speaks, she uses simple, ordinary phrases which are so natural as calling of the rooks going back home through the sunset. They have just the same effect on the mind.

The trouble is that most people seem secretly to consider their unreadiness of speech a sure sign of depth of character. This may be so, of course, but I believe it means shallowness just as often. Those who do not trouble to form the habit of talking agreeably are apt to pride themselves—like the historic parrot—on thinking ‘ a devil of a lot.’

Still there is no doubt that the garrulous bore is the most maddening creature to be shut up with for any length of time, on the wide earth. Individuals who have always regarded themselves as humane must be driven by the constant society of the sort of bore who will pour forth an endless stream of trivial conversation to commit murder in their hearts. I myself should no doubt be too much of a coward to kill the individual who could never let me read the page of a book, or write a letter, or sit looking

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into the fire without interruption ; but the impulse would be there, and written down in my eternal account.

As a matter of fact, I have sometimes wondered if these impulsive, perfectly meaningless murders of which one has read at times, *can* have come about through one party babbling on endlessly—just once too often—when the other longed to be left in peace. I can imagine a rush of boredom to the head having such an effect.

And yet there is a lonely soul so frequently peering out through the anxious eyes of the humble, garrulous bore. Such persons always seem to be eagerly trying to get the attention which they are not able to command, while their tiresome manner often hides a kind—even a thoughtful nature.

It is the self-satisfied garrulous bore who excites our worst passions, particularly if we live in the same house with him or her ; but the self-satisfied silent bore is infinitely more odious to meet in company. There can be no less agreeable human being than the young man or woman who adopts the air of ‘ watching the fleas perform,’ at any gathering to which they lend their presence. They are the true bores, because they are only interested in themselves.

No one can explain altogether why some people are attractive and some ~~are~~ not, but I think there is one general rule that holds good—a bored person is nearly always a bore. The clever, vital creature is much more easily satisfied than the dullard who

ON BORES

adopts a critical attitude in order to obtain a false feeling of superiority.

Then there is the bore who talks of ailments, the bore who rises to go and can't get away, the bore who is obsessed by a grievance; the bore who stays too long; but I have not included any of these for the very simple reason that every charming person in the world —you and I included—is that kind of bore. We may be so only occasionally, and we may do our best to avoid it, but we must belong to the innumerable company for some hours of our life, at any rate—even if we unite the fascinations of a Cleopatra with the mental brilliance of a Madame de Staël.

And after all, this is a pleasant thought, for it makes the dullest of us cheer up with a warm sense of human brotherhood. Those around us may be endowed with infinite social gifts; they may scintillate until we feel quite dazzled; but we can still whisper in our own hearts: “Take courage! Sooner or later that paragon will be a bore, too, if only for ten minutes!”

FLATTERY

EVERYBODY knows that vain people are the most sensitive. The reason for this is, of course, that they are like those toys bought by the kerbstone which can be inflated to bursting point, so they instinctively fear the horrid sensation of seeing themselves burst and dwindle to their real size before their very eyes.

But even the more modest of us experience a timid, joyous wonder when we view our inconsiderable selves swelling under the influence of judicious flattery. It gives such a warm reassurance—if we can only swallow enough—when we were feeling a little forlorn and blown about with the winds of life.

To be given credit for what we lack is, of course, the most delightful kind of flattery. But to tell our friends even of agreeable things which are true, may give us the character of being a flatterer, because there is such a mistaken notion abroad in this country that the individual who makes sharp remarks must be sincere, while the one who says pleasant things must be more or less a humbug.

Only the other day, a woman said to me: “Oh, I never take any notice what So-and-so says, because she is such a flatterer. She only tells you the *nice* things she has heard about you, and keeps the nasty ones to herself.”

The speaker, however, made a mistake; because it is not flattery to pass on pleasant comments. It is

FLATTERY

indeed just a little act of human kindness—like giving a bunch of flowers over the hedge to a neighbour passing on the road ; one who may be—all unknown to any one—just a little tired and out of heart. You and I feel sometimes like that, and when we meet such a giv'r—man or woman—we go on our way comforted. The day seems not so bad after all ; the world less cruel than we had begun to think it.

This distrust of agreeable speeches is stronger in the North, I think, than elsewhere, and it emanates no doubt from our deep-rooted distrust of the smooth tongue which hides the callous heart. We have proved by experience how often these two go together, and our own honesty makes us feel we would rather be hurt than bamboozled. So we are apt to mistake real expansiveness of nature for ‘gush,’ and to regard the acquaintance who counts out approving words in a grudging way as if it rather hurt, as on a higher plane than one who loves to be able to bestow them.

But there is a specially dangerous form of flattery by which every human being can be influenced more or less. It is not spontaneous. It is manufactured with design. And it consists in telling a rather unpleasant truth which does not matter, followed shortly afterwards by the delightful untruth which the victim has always longed to believe.

For instance, a woman will say : “ My dear ! I can’t stand that hat ! You really have awful taste in hats ! ” And this may slightly prick the woman who is not very clever with her clothes. But the

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same speaker before leaving the house may add : “ You know I am very blunt. I always say what I think. So you won’t think I am flattering when I tell you what a *wonderful* hostess you are.” The fascinated listener responds warmly : “ Yes, I know you are sincere.” And more particularly will she respond thus if she is dimly aware that she never was, and never can be, a social success.

But there is a certain kind of woman whom everybody recognises for a flatterer at once, and despises as such. She is always past her first youth, and was more common forty years ago than now, but she still exists, and you can hear her gushing nervously at parties over this person’s children and that person’s dogs, with the laudatory adjectives tinkling like rain as she scatters them about without any regard to their suitability.

The glorious flattery of all, however—the very apotheosis of it—is that which a young man pours out at the feet of his beloved, and to which she responds more or less adequately as imagination and character permit. This kind inspired Shakespeare’s sonnets and the Song of Solomon ; and though it is assumed by some that a girl or a woman sits and sighs, feeling she is getting her due, but giving no return in kind, this is not true—unless the love is only satisfied vanity, or fancy without depth. A woman who really gives her heart cannot help also giving flattery, because it belongs to this time of the affections progress no less naturally than a primrose to the spring.

THE BOGIE CALLED WHAT-THEY-SAY

THIS horrid creature with the hyphenated name used to go about openly without disguise, so that a woman endowed with courage and common sense who had come down in the world could actually acknowledge its tyranny to the extent of rising secretly before dawn to do her front-door step as if she were committing a crime, for fear of her neighbour's remarks. She was dogged by that same fear in her love, her hate, her religion. And we women of the twentieth century thank Providence that we are delivered from these chains.

But are we? I believe that so long as men, women, and children remain human they will continue to have a regard for the opinion of their fellow-creatures, and that this is a fundamental condition of our existence upon the earth. Further, that those who shout most loudly: "I don't care tuppence *what* people say!" are just the very ones who are most afraid of the bogie. As a matter of fact, they care so tremendously what people say of them that rather than go unnoticed, they will render themselves obnoxious to the whole human family in order to make everybody turn round to look at them. And incredible as it may seem, the very motive which actuates the ill-mannered little boy at a party who kicks the table, and the little girl who won't join in the games, has been elevated by some highly conscientious people into a virtue.

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The unpleasant little boy and girl may, of course, develop into a charming man and woman—though their subconscious desire for infant notoriety spoils their own happiness and injures that of the whole party at the time. But the grown-up person who has no reason for silly acts excepting that they are unconventional, is far more influenced by the thought of what may be said than a great-grandmother who was ready to faint if the rude wind displayed too much stocking, or a man who was afraid to knock in a nail on a Sunday.

Especially foolish is the married woman who aspires to be thought modern and intellectual and simply dares not say straight out that she is happy with her husband. She may know the truth of this in her own heart, and thank God for it, but her fear of what the younger generation may say causes her to wail with the unhappy ones : “ Marriage is a failure ! ”

Such as these do not know, of course, what actuates them ; they simply think that they are being untrammelled in their opinion..

In quite another way, those with no desire at all for notoriety are often troubled by this fear. I suppose there are very few sensitive people but have come back from a party at one time or another with a feeling as if their outer skin had been miraculously removed during the entertainment, and as if flies with hot feet were now walking about the thin epidermis underneath. *What did I say ? Why did I say it ? What are they thinking about me now ?*

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So they go on until, if they are lucky, the twilight and the fresh air and a quiet star coming out begin to soothe their spirits into calm again.

Such people say to themselves with determination : “ I really will *not* care so much what others think of me ! ”

But if they have grown up ever since they were little with a craving to be loved which neither years nor experience can quench, they will continue to desire a great deal of affection. It is always a question whether such as these get extra happiness in proportion to the extra suffering which they endure, and I can only say what I myself think. I consider that, as a rule, the woman who can come away from the party with the unpleasant feelings already described, has this compensation : that sometimes she walks home in a frame of mind which causes her to feel as if she trod on air and all the stars were singing together—and with no more real reason than she had for her discomfort. Which seems to me to make the bad time worth while.

Anyway it has to be acknowledged that we really are bound, while we remain in the world, and sane, to be conscious of What-they-say. We very often hear the remark : “ I just do as I think right.” But so does the King of the Cannibal Islands when he devours human flesh to the strains of the aboriginal jazz band. That is no guide whatever, excepting in so far as we have trained ourselves to think rightly.

To prove how this fear grows, I may tell of a woman

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who once became obsessed with the idea that nobody liked her. She went so far as to gather proof of this from almost every detail of daily life. If any one happened to refuse an invitation to her house, she wondered why they were offended ; if the fishman in the street failed to see her and respond to her nod, she began to worry lest he should have noticed her buying a haddock elsewhere. At last one day she met a dog of her acquaintance who walked off without wagging his tail, and she went home feeling hurt about that. Then, being mercifully not without a sense of humour, she all at once realised the point to which her intense desire to be liked had brought her.

If she recalls that incident still, it should remind her of the escape she had from a great danger ; because so many men and women become unbalanced simply from over-indulgence in that preoccupation which none of us can altogether avoid. The poor, half-insane creature who hears an errand-boy laugh with a friend in the street over some jolly, irrepressible, boyish joke, and glances agonised over her shoulder, thinking they are ridiculing herself, may easily have started just by dwelling too much on what she thinks people think of her.

We must all mind what people say—those who shout : “I don’t care !” equally with those who whimper : “I can’t help caring so dreadfully.” But the strange, almost unbelievable thing is this—that What-they-say is at once a spectre which may

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pursue us until we go mad and an angel which safeguards the very foundations of human society. We have free will in this as in all else, and can make of it either evil or good, according to the way in which we react to its presence.

Feared too much, it is indeed the creature we thought it ; but looked at unafraid it is that which warns ordinary men and women from straying into those dangerous byways where genius, truly not caring, has so often met with disaster.

FIRST FANCY

A GREAT many middle-aged people regard first love as a sort of emotional measles which has to be got over sooner or later, but which, with ordinary luck, leaves no serious after-effects.

This idea arises, however, from the common mistake of confusing first love with first *fancy*, which is a very different thing.

For instance, a woman will say: "Oh, my dear, I met an old admirer of mine at Scarborough last week, and he actually had a bald head and an advancing waistcoat. It seems incredible that I once thought myself hopelessly in love with him."

But as a matter of fact she never was in love with the stout gentleman—only at the period referred to he was still slim enough to fit inside the niche which she had all ready for the dream figure who was to come riding towards her out of the misty future. The emotion she had experienced in her girlhood was nearly as far removed from love as that sort of fancy which made her still hope a little earlier that fairies *truly* danced on those light green rings in the pastures.

I myself fell into first fancy at the age of six, when I was taken to the pantomime and saw dear Dick Whittington listening to the bells of London. I thought how splendid it would be if I could marry him, so that we might play together always in the sunshine, coming in to meals when we liked, and sitting up late every night. Even when I heard the grown-

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ups say that he was really a fat lady with a husband and a family, it made no difference. I saw—and still see—the real Dick Whittington in a little blue suit sitting on a milestone in the morning of life. And I believe the feelings of many young girls who come home flushed and bright-eyed from a dance—though deeper emotions are now beginning to be awakened—may yet be almost as innocent as that. For though they do not go to sleep any more with the programme under their pillows after the sentimental fashion of their grandmothers, and know, theoretically, everything about love and passion, the glamour of the untried is over it all, just the same as ever. They have the old curiosity to find out what it is like to love and be loved.

But first fancy, though distinct from first love, may lead to it, and in any case is not a thing to ridicule without understanding. It is the natural opening out like a flower in the morning sun, of a desire which is so strangely half-spiritual and half-physical that it at once raises us above ordinary life, and yet places us on a level with the field-mouse in the hedge, our little brother.

Of course there are girls and men who never had fancies—whom temperament or circumstances seem to have deprived of this part of human experience—but I cannot help thinking that these exceptions are less numerous than some people would have us believe. The little servant girl who is one of a large family, and so has known from early childhood all the

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most sordid facts about marriage, is no more deprived of this delicate approach to love than her most carefully nurtured sisters.

She will go back to her place after the pictures on her night out, to dream of the male cinema star kissing her as he kissed the girl on the film, and will fall asleep with a smile on her round face. But this feeling will not make her any less ready to fall truly in love with the milkman when the time comes. Indeed, to wish that young people should not experience first fancy is like wanting butterflies to begin flying without the lovely dust on their wings.

The trouble is this—that they so easily may mistake first fancy for first love ; and that not only just at the time, but long enough to spoil their lives. Then they awake too late to the knowledge that the feeling which has caused them to turn from those who might have made them happy, was not the real thing after all. This mistake is the more easily made because first fancy does so closely resemble first love — that tremendous factor in human existence which has been recognised as such all down the ages. For a girl's first lover—he who first brings into conscious life all the latent emotions with which she has been created, so that she may be the friend of man and the mother of the race—can never have a small place in her experience. She may not marry him ; she may come to dislike him ; she may even seem to forget him ; but his impress will remain on her character until she dies.

FIRST FANCY

There is, moreover, an odd theory going about that those who marry their first love must necessarily regret it. Women who argue in this fashion will say : “ Early engagements must be a mistake. The man you choose at thirty is entirely different from the one you would have married at twenty.”

Such people forget that the couples who marry young develop together, and the ones who marry later develop separately. The influence of companionship over many years of happy married life is actually visible sometimes in old people, who seem to have grown like each other in the face. But the man and woman over thirty are ‘ set ’ in their ways as well as their features.

It seems to me that those who marry early mostly fail, not because they *get* less out of marriage, but because they *expect* so much more. The reasonable woman no longer in her early youth has looked round and been forced to see the gingerbread without the gilt on it, and she knows that such is the common lot of human beings. But she may come to first love at that age, and the radiance is just as bright as that seen by the girl of twenty ; no more and no less lovely, though with a different loveliness—for one is like that morning in spring when the first violets are out, and the other like a night in June when a star trembles through the end of the sunset.

And if you or I have ever mistaken fancy for love we may have this consolation, that we are in very good company. Because all through mediæval history,

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knights and poets and fair maidens looking out of high towers were doing exactly the same thing. It was first fancy that inspired the songs of the troubadours and caused Dante to worship Beatrice from afar. It is still fancy that sends a man to watch at midnight under his lady's window—though love alone will make him toil hard, day in and day out, to earn an increase in salary so that he can offer her a home.

LOVE OF PLACES

Love of places—like every other kind of love—is simply ridiculous to those who do not experience it. And as the confirmed bachelor of late middle age will view the transports of a youthful father over his first little son, so a person who has never really loved any particular place will regard the affection which some human beings are capable of feeling for a town, a village, a house, or a garden. So I have seen women capable of adoring a Pekinese dog who yet were unaffectedly astounded that any sensible person could waste an equally ardent affection on—for instance—that sheltered lane where the first primroses come out every spring.

But then nothing, of course, is ever so strange as love to the one who is not a lover.

And beauty seems to matter no more here than it does in the real devotion of men and women for each other. I know a little hill with a plantation on one side of it, and a ragged hawthorn hedge on the other, and a blank skyline at the top across which the village people go to church one by one on a Sunday morning, which is not really beautiful at all. My pleasure in it is akin to the tender radiance cast by the magic power of love, upon faces which some consider plain and dull.

And it always seemed to me as if this feeling about places were a most powerful factor in the happiness of the human race. For conditions could only be

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equalised in this way between the inhabitants, say, of Taormina, and of the flat, wind-swept country where I live. We go away to enjoy the sight of beautiful places, but our *love* is for the blown trees stretching gaunt arms away from the north-east, and for that great arch of sky which spreads over our flat landscape.

Naturally I am not speaking of those whose minds are affected by the cosmopolitan blight, for they are open equally to admire or dislike all places, without being able to love any. They cannot experience the little thrill of tenderness with which you and I greet silently the mud cliffs, or the very ordinary village street, or the crowded thoroughfare which is part of our very lives.

I am not speaking now of love of country, which is rather a different subject, and one with which other considerations are mixed up; only, of that deep attachment to some ordinary spot, which is not just the sentiment of the cat for the accustomed basket, but which takes its place among the deepest instincts of the human heart.

That this emotion does act as I have suggested, became clear enough to me one evening not very long ago, when Holderness farm-labourer returned from a first visit to London. He was away three days, and on Saturday night he took up once more his accustomed place near the old stone cross at the meeting of the four cross-roads, where the clubable portion of the village foregathers.

LOVE OF PLACES

"Well," said an eager-faced little tailor from the South, "what did you think of London? You can understand me calling this part of the world dead-and-alive now, can't you?"

The countryman took from his mouth the bit of grass he was chewing. "Lunnon!" he said. "Why, I stopped i' Lunnon fra' Thursday to Saturday, and I nivver fun' out which was market day." He paused, letting his glance rove slowly over the little, clustered houses that stood up greyly against the immense field of the sunset sky. "No—a," he said, "give me Danwick of a Saturday night. There's summat abo'it Danwick—"

I listened to the heavy tread of footsteps going home; to the last sounds of bird and beast; to the night wind from the sea in the branches of the trees. The man had put into words what I had thought for a long while. It is not the place—it's something *about* the place; and that somethin*g* exists in the spirit of the beholder.

An extreme example of this feeling was afforded about the middle of the last century by an old North-countryman who was dying, and who found out towards the last that none of his descendants cared enough for his grey stone house to live in it. He waited until the nurse was out, and the old servant in the garden, and then he crept downstairs and set fire to the house. He could not bear to think of leaving it behind in a world where no one loved it. Though I once used this incident in a novel, it is

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quite true—a happening within my own mother's knowledge.

But we who possess this joy must pay a high price for it if we have to leave places dear to us ; for when we go to visit them again, the familiar house and garden seem somehow to have retreated into themselves—like some human being whom we have neglected. That which once gave colour and warmth has ceased to come forth at our appearance, and all that is left is an aching sense of loss. So we come away forlornly, making up our minds that we must not go back any more.

Occasionally, however, if our fancy and not our affection has been engaged, things are different. And in this connection, I may perhaps recall a memory of my own early childhood. I had been taken to visit two old ladies who lived at the top of a slope of very green grass on which two tame seagulls were feeding, and though I never went there again, the imposing spectacle of an immense grey house at the summit of this green hill remained with me all through my youth. I used to think about it in bed at night, picturing the wonderful things that must lie behind those long, bright windows. Then I married, and by a strange chance lived quite near to this house, only I did not recognise it. And I could scarcely believe, even when I was told, that so much splendour *could* have dwindled down to a moderate-sized villa with a small sloping lawn in front. I even felt unreasonably glad the seagulls were both dead, so that I could

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forget as I went past every day that the wonder-house of my childhood and this uninteresting residence were the same. For I wanted still to keep that vivid memory picture of grey and green and blue.

And there lies the great joy in having been a lover of places—especially when we grow older and less able to go about in search of beauty-spots to admire. For while the image of a temple by moonlight may remain in our minds until we forget all earthly things, we do not feel the real emotion which is produced in us by those pictures of odd moments at home which often seem quite meaningless. I like to *think* of Karnak—the great temple a' Luxor—but I am *stirred* by the memory of a wood one spring morning long ago, with the wood-pigeons calling and the sun bringing out the scent of the primroses. That April day has all the colours of spring as delicate and vivid as when I was a child, and yet there is no reason why this should be so, or why one primrose-gathering should be better remembered than another. I think perhaps it is really that I did love that wood with all my heart; and that we who truly love places are given such pictures for keepsakes against when we grow old.

But apart from the sentimental side of the question, it is a mercy that we are still—in spite of modern progress—so capable of attachment to districts which have no particular charm in themselves. For if men and women ever begin to see quite clearly the advan-

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tages and disadvantages of various places of residence, without regard to feeling, some districts will become overcrowded with all who can afford to live there, while the others less agreeable will contain only discontented inhabitants.

As a plain matter of fact, however, I think this can never happen. So long as human nature does not fundamentally change, warm-hearted people will continue to feel a little glow at the words—"Our town," which will make up for the beauties they might have elsewhere.

Everybody can see the working of this theory of the equalising of happiness by means of love of places if they only wait a little and look about them. I saw this plainly enough last spring, when a man, greatly travelled, came back to see his brother who had stayed at home on a farm in the bleakest and most uninteresting part of the east coast of England. The returned traveller was not one of those weary listeners with tales, but on the Sunday evening, as he and his brother strolled together about the farmyard, he was moved to say something of the wonders of the flowering trees in spring on those lower slopes of the Himalayas where he had spent most of his time of service.

"Yes. Yes. Very nice," replied the farmer abstractedly, stooping to pick up a drifting wisp of straw. Then he raised himself and added with real interest: "Just come along here. Now, what d'you think of that, hey? You may go all round the world,

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but I bet you won't beat that view of the sunset across the pigsty end."

So here is one of those things in human life which we have to laugh at and love at the same time—the things which endear life to us, in spite of all the hardnesses.

I am like the old woman in the almshouse to whom I had been reading a chapter in Revelations, for I hope, as she did, that there may be a sort of side-heaven for poor folks such as us, with hedges coming out in spring, and beech trees like we have at the bottom of our lane.

But the sorrowful side of this love is very real, and only those who have experienced it can imagine the ache of leaving a spot greatly beloved, knowing quite surely that absence will cause every stone and branch to wear, after a while, that strange, forlorn look as of something unkindly deserted.

Still it is worth while—a thousand times worth while ; for like all other love, this love of places will enrich the soul as much by the pain it brings as by the joy.

HONEYMOONS

HONEYMOONS are in one respect like human faces—millions of them have existed in the world, and no two were ever absolutely alike.

Mere details have been the same, of course, but there has always been some infinitesimal variation in the combination of those details which made the difference. For instance, numberless bridegrooms must have found themselves stranded beyond the reach of shops without a toothbrush ; but the precise manner of the discovery and what happened afterwards must be just a little different in every case.

Also, though brides usually pack too efficiently for that sort of omission to occur, there must have been a countless host from first to last who have gone away to remote places taking nothing but new shoes with them, and have in consequence found the flowery paths of dalliance through wood and vale less of a rapturous delight than of an obligation to be fulfilled in order to avoid disappointing the new husband. And yet every one of these brides has performed her act of self-denial with some tiny shade of difference from all the rest.

Afterwards, of course, such incidents often form the foundation of that stock of family jokes without which I think no married life ever was entirely successful ; but in the meantime they do not seem funny at all. For at that time other emotions are taking up so much more than their fair share in the mind

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that something has to go—which something is often a sense of humour.

It really seems as if the Spirit of the Ridiculous must enjoy teasing those who have thus temporarily crowded him out. As in the case of the poor bridegroom, deeply in love but no longer quite young, who had the misfortune to drop his false teeth on the stone floor of the balcony in his palatial hotel dressing-room, at the very identical moment when he was gazing at the moon for a brief space before joining his beloved on the other side of the highly varnished communicating door.

And this was not comic. Let any bridegroom, past, present, or to come, endeavour to put himself in that unhappy gentleman's place, and it will be clear enough that the affair was tragic. For there was the newly married wife waiting for him in a flutter of romance; and here was he, desperately endeavouring to fit broken pieces of dental workmanship into his mouth, without success. Then a church clock outside wailed him of the flight of time, and he appeared suddenly before his wife, looking ... very odd, and muttering so strangely: “Tharah! At latht!” that she fell back in dismay and began to glance round for the bell.

But it proved to be a blessing in disguise after all, because these two people had always been just a little too dull and proper to be really happy in the world, and now they had to start married life with a jest so broad and easily visible that even *they* couldn't help

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seeing it by the time they returned home from the wedding journey.

Honeymoons vary extraordinarily, however, even on the written page—from that immortal one described by Milton which is the most lovely of which man's imagination is capable, right down to the old story of the mid-Victorian bride who stopped short at Folkestone, because she really felt she could not bring herself to cross the Channel with a gentleman who was no relation excepting by marriage.

After thinking of this last, one comes with a sort of mental jolt upon a clear-eyed modern girl who openly states her intention with regard to the perpetuation of the human race at the party given to view the wedding presents; and this in no hole-and-corner sort of fashion, but with the clarion voice of chanticleer heralding the morn.

But as contrasts are stimulating it is agreeable to recall, while listening to her, a honeymoon of the period of *Nicholas Nickleby*—when the bridesmaid often accompanied the happy pair lest a ‘delicate female’ should be too abruptly thrust into the sole companionship of the coarser male.

Still there was one charm about Victorian courtships which is sometimes lacking in these more enlightened days: the newly wedded couple did start off in an atmosphere of faith and hope—not of hope only. Every one felt sure that they were going to live together until one of them died, and they had every intention of bringing children into the world

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to fill their places when they were gone. That long month of seclusion might be dull and was almost certainly a mistake, but they did not begin their married life ignobly.

The essentials of the honeymoon, however, must always remain the same ; because the god of change, who rules all else, has no power in love. That of which Milton wrote in the grey stone cottage among the hawthorns and chestnut tree can never go out of fashion, and the words, "Part of my soul, I seek thee"—express what every bridegroom who truly loves still feels towards his bride. The very carpet of 'violet, crocus, and hyacinth' on which Eve trod, and the rose leaves which fell upon those first lovers while they slept, are not only descriptions but symbols—new always to every one who reads them, with an exquisite freshness which seems somehow to hold the morning dew of life.

But as this great poem contains not only wonder but a sort of divine common sense, we are soon made aware of the danger encountered by those fortunate ones who have been rapt into such a state of bliss. They are certain to find it very difficult indeed to come down to the ordinary give and take of man and wife. After a period during which each has believed themselves as perfect in the other's eyes as Adam and Eve before the Fall, and both have tried to live up to this idea, a desire for less exacting society will begin to creep in which may ruin their happiness almost before married life has begun. For it is during the

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second part of the honeymoon, when couples begin to settle down, that the actual test comes. No living woman, however wise, will ever fail to feel surprised and hurt that her husband *could* be sharp about the breakfast bacon after such a period of adoration. And no husband will ever feel pleased when the pliant creature who seemed but a rib taken from his side at the seaside hotel, suddenly proves to have a will of her own about the housekeeping allowance.

There is one hard fact which must be faced by the most romantic—if they want to be happy—and it is this : “*that glamour, in the nature of things, cannot stay.*” Everything that really matters, remains ; but that most beautiful thing has to go. It is like the little angels on old ceilings—all bright eyes and hair and flashing wings—and there is no use in expecting that to sit down cosily by the domestic hearth, which simply does not possess the accommodation.

And the element of strangeness during the first days of the honeymoon affects some natures, of course, quite differently from others. To some it is an excitement and a stimulus. But there are couples who feel it so acutely that the love and pleasure which they ought to enjoy are altogether spoiled, and they will own later that many succeeding holidays have proved more agreeable ; all glamour was there, all the same, though they did not recognise it.

This is particularly so with the young man and woman who would deny it most, and who go forth

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wearing all their oldest clothes to spend what may be called the common-sense honeymoon. For they are simply filled with a glorious sense of adventure, finding it splendid sport to make people believe that they have been married for years, and enjoying their greatest triumph when some mild old lady asks innocently how many children they have left at home. Though they flatter themselves that they have dispensed with glamour, it is just as visible to the intelligent observer as if they were wearing obvious trousseaux and occupying the bridal suite.

But I think the couple no longer exactly young, whom nobody had wanted much before they found each other, are the most delightful honeymooners to meet; for they have just come out into a world so new to them that the commonest daisy is a wonder. This bride never gathered the blooms of ordinary love-making all along the road, and will never have heard any man say her eyes were beautiful, or her hand the dearest to hold in the world, until her husband told her so.

And he—if he is the sort I mean—will begin to lift up his head and put a little flesh on his spare bones even before the end of the honey noon, because he is able at last to rest his anxious, nervous soul in an atmosphere of uncritical appreciation.

This period generally seems more or less agreeable to the outsider; but one way of spending it still exists in Yorkshire—and I fancy also among some good old families on the Continent—which always appears

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to me unenviable. For the first two or three days of marriage are spent under the roof of the bride's parents, possibly amongst a crowd of little brothers and sisters, and with no apparent chance of a moment's solitude for the newly married couple. This custom with us is by no means confined to what are called 'the poor,' but is the habit of many self-respecting, working families who lived on the land hereabouts before half the modern peerages were heard of, and it strikes me as being a probable survival of a very ancient custom.

Thus—having kept the best until now—I come at last to the perfect honeymoon. The happy couple have left the flowerly white wedding behind them, and by this time have only a confused memory of coloured light streaming through a church window—of friends all smiling and wishing them well—of a lump in the bride's throat as she kisses her mother—of a great shower of confetti—of people waving and shouting good luck. They are alone together in the car, the quiet hedgerows rushing past them, and it is towards evening when they reach the country inn where they are to spend the night. There they have the first meal together as husband and wife, and afterwards there is the inn garden all fragrant in the twilight; all the white flowers advancing from the rich gloom, as they do at this hour, while the coloured ones, that have been so gorgeous in the day, recede.

Glamour is now surrounding bride and bridegroom

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like a silver cloud ; and though that must go, the true love which—as old Sir Thomas à Kempis says—‘makes all bitter things sweet and pleasant,’ will be left with them to the end if they continue true lovers.

THE SACRED MILLION

MEN have always worshipped power ; perhaps because it has really seemed to them the power to create happiness.

So they have bowed down in rotation to the dim, uncomprehended forces of nature, to strength, love, valour, and to the conquest of the body by the soul.

Now we worship the idea of millions of money.

A hush and a thrill goes through us when we read of a million such as men used to feel when the Host went by, along the streets of some mediæval town. That is the mystic sign of the presence among us of our god. And though money is a fine servant, as a god, it does seem to develop all the evil qualities of the slave seated between the cherubim.

But none other has ever obtained such abject homage or produced in its worshippers such a lowering humility. In all the old creeds men did at least exact that a priest should be a priest ; but in this new one many people will actually fall down on their knees if any cheat or liar holds up a champagne bottle. The gold foil has become a symbol.

Worse than that, the finest men and women are refraining every day from giving their best work to the world owing to this one cause. And while we say that this was always the case, we know that is not quite true. In mediæval Europe and old Japan a great number of people could be found who loved the work better than the reward, which gave them an

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independence of soul which we free men and women lack. We cannot even understand it. So while prophets, priests, and philosophers of all ages have cried out to the people of the world that they should not put their trust in riches, it was reserved for us to bring forth a race of prophets who declaim boldly and openly that in riches alone a man must trust for his happiness in life. We have actually made ‘getting rich’ into an ideal.

And as we may make terrible mistakes involving cruelty and bloodshed and endless misery without killing our nobility, if there is something fine and noble in our ideal, so a low ideal may permit us to crawl comfortably until we lose the use of our wings.

We have persuaded ourselves that the ideal of ‘getting rich’ is noble, because the goodness that is within all men leads them to desire in their belief a semblance of goodness. So we say that a narrow life will not provide a proper flying-ground for the exercise of our wings ; or we say that we want to be rich in order to benefit our souls by a wide outlook, and the world at large by our deeds.

But should we become acquainted with any who have to our own knowledge amassed great riches, we do not find that they are on the whole so much better or happier than ourselves. Then how has this idea of millions obtained such an influence over our imagination ? The fact is, I think, that the superstition of riches has taken hold of us, as the superstition of the devil took hold of our forefathers.

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We are no longer possessed by the devil because we have freed ourselves from the idea of the devil ; but we are possessed by money, because we have not realised that we are possessed.

It is just as foolish to despise money as to despise food, but if we were not possessed we could no more make a god of it than we should endow a cat with supernatural powers.

All the same, so long as riches mean opportunity, we shall all want to be rich ; and if some Crœsus were to throw a shower of notes into our midst, you and I who now sit in judgment would certainly not be the last to go down on our knees and scramble with the rest—using a sharp elbow too, if our neighbour did not behave. For those who have energy enough to think this matter out, would not remain among the lookers on.

Most of us must own this, if we are sincere with ourselves. And we also have to confess that we feel a little thrill of satisfaction when we hear that a millionaire has practically no stomach ; for it does seem a sort of solace to those of us who have excellent digestive organs and a lack of lobster mayonnaise.

Men are like that ; and must be so long as they are human. But though the worship of riches is an old religion, there has never before been a danger that it might become the *sole* religion. And yet that is what is surely going to happen to the world unless those who see the danger coming can rouse themselves to combat, with all the energy of the first martyrs, the terrible belief that material welfare by itself can make happiness.

THE DECAY OF JOLLITY

IT is a strange thing to look round on the world and to realise that jollity means nothing at all to a great number of our fellow-beings. They know the word in the dictionary, but that which it represents is not in their minds at all, so the symbol cannot call it forth.

Dickens was one of the few who were ever able to capture the spirit of it so that men reading could feel the glow between the lines. And yet when a young man of this generation fails to appreciate the jollity of the Christmas party at Dingley Dell, we have no more right to condemn him than we should have if we offered him a pot of woad and he replied with a certain haughtiness : “ Thank you, I prefer tweed.”

For blue stain on a naked leg and trousers elegantly creased are not wider apart, spiritually, than is the ‘hectic time’ enjoyed at a modern restaurant and the jollification in which Mr. Pickwick and party joined with such zest. And even those who are lucky enough to recognise this quality when they meet with it, have a hard job in front of them when they begin to try and say what it really is. I think, perhaps, it must belong to those other things in human experience which still rove free—the nest of language not having caught them yet. It is certainly not always present in the company of merrymakers, while wit has the effect of actually scaring it away. I feel sure that a party composed entirely of dons with

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advanced views, the principals of girls' colleges, and poets justly celebrated for the composition of *vers libre*, might have it among them—but it seems a little unlikely. And it *might* add pleasure to the foreign holiday of a politician on the make, or a family emerging from the possession of one shop to the enjoyment of the profits of fifteen ; though I scarcely think so. But the small, honest shopkeeper, with his comfortable wife and his family of children, did at one time possess in himself all the elements best fitted to produce that most delightful refreshment to the heart of man. He was comfortably removed from the suspense of want, and had not the self-consciousness which drives jollity away by attempts to appear publicly jolly.

The strangest part of the affair, however, is this—that the moment a human being begins to think he has a *right* to be jolly—that he has, i.e. a way, produced the goods and should have a right to call the tune—the thing is at an end. For jollity recognises no rights. Indeed, I suspect that the insistence on rights by all classes of the community—from the millionaire to the mud-scraper in the street—is one main cause of our ceasing to be jolly. We are gay—gayer than for a long time in our history—but we are ceasing to be good-natured ; and jollity without good-nature is no more possible than joy without hope. We set a price on our capacity for happiness, and so become bitter when Fate refuses us the Rolls Royce, or Ford, or motor-bicycle, or donkey-cart, or new pair of boots, which is the lowest we will take to be happy.

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That is why the good-natured ladies who still laugh with easy tolerance at the head of tables which are rather overcrowded with their children and their children's friends, do something fine of which they never even dream. They are keeping jollity alive, so that when the next generation is ready to find it again, it will still be in the world. The same service to mankind is all unconsciously performed by the stout business man who comes up from the railway station carrying a bass containing a prime bit of salmon or some fine strawberries, beaming with the thought of entertaining a friend or two when he gets home. So do the working family from a back street, who go off for the day to the seaside, taking their dinner in a basket and paddling all in a row—father and mother and all—at the edge of the waves. So do the middle-class couple who go larking up to London for a three days' trip for their one holiday in the year, and stare at the shops all the morning, and are so splendidly amused by the people in the enormous, fifth-rate hotel, and attend a theatre in the cheap seats each evening. After all, there are a good many of them left when we begin ready to seek in the right places.

But no wonder jollity is a little rare at present. We have another, deeper reason for this than change of taste, in the fact that while human beings may be *gay* when suffering a reaction from misery and pain, they are seldom *jolly*. For while a steadily balanced mind and heart are not necessary to the enjoyment

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of a ‘hectic time,’ without them the warm glow of jollity cannot exist.

So though we must be sorry that something so English and so delightful is out of fashion at present among our fellow-countrymen, we need only look back to feel comforted. Then we see that this quality—which is at once so elusive and so real—is a part of our heritage. It was there in us when Chaucer wrote his tale with the jolly freshness of the morning in every line of it, and those deep roots have not been destroyed, even by such a storm as we have endured.

Jollity lurks even now in such unexpected places—as I found out the other day when a charwoman came to work for me. She was plain, sallow, worn down with hard work and children and little money, and yet I heard her saying as she scrubbed the kitchen floor: “My husband never goes to the Public of a Saturday night. He fetches his pint home, and I warm it up with sugar and a bit of spice, if it’s cold weather; and then we have it in front of the fire together after the children’s gone to bed. Sometimes we play a game of Beggar my Neighbour. Sometimes he reads me the jokes out of the *Flodmouth Herald*; and a rare bit of fun we have over them. Ay; it’s best bit of the week—that is!”

And as she splashed her brush into the bucket, I felt the presence of that true English jollity which made of a draggled charwoman, a very heiress to the splendid wife of Bath.

But the moment people say in effect: “See how

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jolly we are ! ” all possibility of jollity departs. Something which looks very like it is often present, for instance, in a restaurant where people hurl balloons at each other ; but the real emotion we seek was not there, and so when we get home we have to read about the party at Mr. Wardle’s, and thus warm our hearts before we go to bed.

HOME

Most people are ready to acknowledge family life as a source of happiness when it is past. But I think a still greater number find in it a source of daily irritation while it is going on. And the constant fret of our present transition state in such relationships has a tendency to blind us to the fact that we owe a great deal of our happiness to a human arrangement which some are beginning to find irksome, but which must nevertheless persist in some form or another as long as the human race endures. We may call marriage and parenthood by what name we will, but they must exist, and must form the basis of society.

And though there is a great deal of controversy about these subjects at present—because we have forsaken the old traditions and have not yet formed new ones—I think that most of us must find when we add up the joys and sorrows of our lives, that we have after all experienced more joy than sorrow from the existence of the family.

We have known heart-breaks through those belonging to us, but our childhood has in this way been made something infinitely better than it could ever otherwise have been. Even should our upbringing have been somewhat careless, or even harsh, we have possessed at the beginning of life a place of our own to which we had an undoubted, unthinking right. And those who have had a childhood's home in the

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best meaning of the word, must keep a memory in their hearts which will prevent their ever quite losing faith in the goodness of human nature. In the same way I think that the husband and wife who really love each other, and have once come for the first time to their own house together, can seldom quite lose the idea of the family as something very sacred and beautiful. They may think they have quite lost it—but it persists in the hearts of their children.

The revolt against the conditions of the family at the present time is more often than not just this secret, hidden feeling finding expression. It is because, subconsciously, we are so deeply impressed by the importance of the family, that we set about in such strange ways to try and make it perfect. And as men have constantly made war in order to obtain peace, so we are destroying marriage and the responsibility of parents to children, and of children to parents, in order to obtain the perfect family.

But I can't help thinking that we should have greater success if we read and thought as earnestly and eagerly about loving more, as we do about our possible chances to love more often. For I am convinced that even those who advocate free-love are not usually going back to the ethics of the farmyard: they are more often honestly trying to discover a family life adapted to the condition of our age.

But while a happy marriage is more common than some people seem to think, it is by no means always a sign of virtue in the happily married. Therefore

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if we happen to be among the fortunate, it seems to me we should be thankful but not superior, and our gratitude should enable us to pity those who have somehow chosen wrongly without feeling either rancour or self-satisfaction.

For it is so little our doing that we are thus happy. We have only given our side of that tremendous bargain, and no one living can make sure beforehand of the other.

Still we can at least remember that both must give, and not for ever keep an inward eye upon what one side ought to receive.

A thousand books and plays must be written every year to show with what difficulty a man and woman may be happy, married ; but I think a greater number of newspaper reports prove that the difficulty lies less in marriage itself than in a desire to be free and yet bound, sheltered and yet a wanderer : to have, in fact, all the advantages of being married and unmarried.

That, of course, can no more become possible than for a man to make a fortune in business and conduct an expedition to the South Pole simultaneously. We cannot, however we legislate, divide the drawbacks of anything—mental or physical—from the advantages.

Marriage, like life, has to be taken in the lump. The despairing ones are those who will forget that simple fact of human existence.

The same reasoning, of course, applies to the

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attitude of parents and children. Parents in these days would preserve discipline without the unpleasant task of enforcing obedience. They are terribly afraid of being unpopular with their children. So they think more of the love they are going to receive than of the ultimate happiness of their offspring.

This is a most subtle form of selfishness because it has learned to wear a cloak of parental devotion ; and it is the more pathetic, because it unites, deep down, with the dear desire that all know—which is to give our children what we have missed in life ourselves.

On the other side, young people so indulged must grow up with a subconscious feeling that they are doing the world a favour by existing in it. And when they go out into life—which fails to treat them as they expected—they feel that everything is hideously unfair.

At home, the first consideration was always that they should be happy ; and they gradually find out, with a sort of injured astonishment, that the world does not care at all whether they are happy or not. Then they very often become bitter or aggressive or flatly discouraged, as the case may be, and perhaps grow finally resentful towards their parents, though they may quite fail to locate the just cause for their resentment. They were never taught, when lessons were easy to learn, that in the family—as everywhere else—there can be no happiness without freedom, no freedom without law, no law without self-restraint.

SOLITUDE

If a traveller were to come from some other world I think he would notice first how much afraid we humans are, and always have been, of Solitude. We spend our energies and waste our precious hours—and sometimes ruin ourselves in fortune—simply because we fear being alone.

For this reason every man and woman should take thought, while there is yet time, to make themselves ‘good company’ to themselves. Then they will never so dread a day with themselves that they are ready to beg any one to form a third.

For as the years go on nearly every one is bound to sit now and then with Solitude. How terrible, then, to look across the hearth during those long winter days, and to see an enemy on the other side of the fire! And how happy a thing it is for us if we have sometimes walked with Solitude when we were young, and the heart was open to form deep friendships; then when we are old we may sit together quite happily, while our talk will be full of those ‘Do you remember?’ which take old friends back to youth.

I believe also that most of our best thoughts grow in solitary hours, if we are not afraid of them; for then the buzzing noise of outside life dies down and there falls a stillness which, even in a grimy, shabby room with tram-cars outside, is like that on long fields at evening. So we come to ourselves, from

SOLITUDE

whom we have perhaps been parted all the day, and the sensation is one of infinite rest and unity.

After a while good thoughts begin to bloom like evening primroses upon that stillness. We watch them bloom. The fragrance is most sweet. So we are refreshed and comforted, with our fretted nerves healed, and little things and big things taking once more their right place in our daily life.

REALITY

We all say there is good in every one, and we must all have encountered those possessing the rare gift of calling goodness forth. This power of which we are conscious so charms us that we may try definitely to achieve it ourselves. And this is where we very often make a mistake.

For the person who goes about obviously ‘seeing the best side’ in their neighbours, and blatantly refusing to see the worst, is not only a bore but a cause of wickedness ; because that attitude actually makes well-meaning but contrary citizens try to exhibit a badness which will force the charitable blinker to open wide eyes of horror. I know from personal experience that nothing on earth is more conducive to unpleasant behaviour than the society of an individual who is openly determined to see the good in all mankind, as represented by me, and who is quite plainly getting up a warm glow of self-approval in the process.

I do not defend this frame of mind—I only say it exists.

But those who *unconsciously* exercise this gift are the most delightful people in the world ; and yet, surely, it cannot be all a sort of divine accident. I think it must be the result of something not connected with what we see and a little beyond our imagination, so that we are like the man eating cucumber for the first time who could not believe that anything so fresh

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and clean-tasted ever grew on a dunghill. It seems to me that the true power of finding the best in others belongs only to people that are real—whatever their other faults and *virtues*—simply because they *are* real. The reality in them goes straight to the reality in their neighbours, and the fusion makes light.

For instance—a party of women not well known to each other are taking tea in a heated room ; the atmosphere buzzes with nervous vibrations and the talk is about social happenings with which none is very familiar, chiefly read of in the newspapers ; then comes a lull, and a rather stout lady with a fresh colour says in a comfortable, easy voice : “Have you heard what eggs are to-day ?”

Instantly the nervous vibrations begin to die down a little and the atmosphere changes as if fresh, calm air had been let in. What has done it ? The reality in the fat woman.

But if we want further proof of this we can find it unsought at nearly every social gathering. A woman greets us, saying words which she knows we hear ; but she also thinks others of which she believes we know nothing. Thus her conversation is merely a jumble of ready-made phrases meaning nothing at all ; and it seems as if the whole of her were as artificial as her manner.

And yet—underneath all that—she too is real ; for that reality is there, hidden in everybody, and ready to spread if only they will try to come to themselves now and then, and let it have a chance. So it very

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often happens that we get to like people when they are in trouble, whom we found before entirely antipathetic. The reason being, of course, that their artificiality was dispersed by their emotion for the time, and the real in them made a sudden, irresistible appeal to the real in us.

In the same way we may read the life of some quite ordinary person chronicled without any particular charm of writing, and yet we receive an impression of extraordinary moral loveliness. But if we consider a little, I think we shall find such are mostly the lives of men and women who have possessed this gift of reality to a high degree.

The most silent people cease to let their real selves be obscured, they have great power, both for good and evil, however incon siderable they may seem. For instance, we hear of such and such a little ordinary man, that in some high stress he was wonderful. But he was no more wonderful than he had always been, only some accident tore the wrappings away and the reality in him had a chance to come forth.

HAPPINESS

NOBODY who looks about them can fail to remark that one of the greatest hindrances to happiness in the present day is our tendency to standardise our conception of it. For most people take their idea of happiness ready made, without in the least considering whether it be really their own or not.

Almost every newspaper, every book, every public speaker emphasises the point that riches and success must necessarily bring happiness—that a man must have a better and pleasanter life in the world with ten grocer's shops than with one—that a man must be happier as a Member of Parliament than as a clerk—with material prosperity than without it.

These statements have been so often repeated that we accept them without thought; but it is for us to see whether or no we, individually, do not daily sacrifice our own ideas of happiness in order that we may conform to a mechanical standard.

It is all right, of course, to tell a boy at school that if he works hard and behaves decently he may achieve ten grocer's shops and a motor-car; but ought not somebody to try and make him feel that his immortal soul requires as much attention as his teeth? For the real danger is, not that we shall come to regard material success essential to happiness, but that we shall believe happiness to be impossible without material success.

Still there can be little doubt, I suppose, that the

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spiritual wonder of the present age is the stirring of a *conscious* desire for happiness.

This desire takes strange forms, hard to recognise, but those who watch with understanding must feel awed and thrilled as if they saw, after long darkness, a spirit of light moving visibly across the face of the world. And such simultaneous thinking is the most tangible sign so far given to men of the actual possibility of that state of happiness which has been called, for want of a closer name, the Kingdom of Heaven.

But we must get rid of the immemorial lie that happiness is shortlived, because we all believe, consciously or subconsciously, that happiness and love are everlasting, and that every moment of real happiness is a part of that central, eternal something which will one day embrace everything.

Only a sort of habit of unhappiness has so grown grown upon civilised people that most of us respond very much more easily to sorrowful or disagreeable impressions than to happy ones. We are, almost all of us, attyned to sorrow.

If we look back sincerely on any day, from rising to bedtime, we cannot help noticing how easily the used chords within ourselves vibrated to every suggestion of unhappiness, while joys had to be definite before we would really feel a response.

Thus we may stand looking out to sea on an April morning when all is sunshine and blue air, and then somebody goes along who reminds us of a past unpleasantness. To which of those suggestions do we

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most keenly and quickly respond—to the hopeful day or the tiresome recollection ? There is such a lot of avoidable misery in our lives which simply comes from this trembling, tingling leadiness of those chords in ourselves which respond to sadness, and from the stiffness of those which respond to joy.

No one can escape sorrow, because it is a part of man's life ; but we are far freer than we believe to create our own misery or happiness.

Only we must not cultivate the inner life at the expense of the outer, for those who live *in* and not *out*, cease to live vitally.

It is the combination of the two which enables us to experience the most perfect human existence now possible. Jesus Christ and Marcus Aurelius, to name but two out of the shining company, were both men who made of their inner life a sanctuary but not a place of residence.

Those who remain too long shut up within the inner life must lack the spacious radiance of Christ.

But this deepened interest in spiritual things is a part of that awakened, conscious desire for happiness, and has already caused a great change in the outlook of civilised people. A hundred years ago it would have seemed incredible that an artisan should possess a bathroom in his own house : a hundred years hence it will seem, one hopes, equally incredible that any man should fail to have a sanctuary in his own mind.

For centuries, however, men have spoken of happiness when they meant satisfaction, and of satisfaction

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when they meant happiness ; which has given rise to a great deal of puzzlement. So we still have to unravel, each one for ourselves, that old confusion.

A longing for unattainable satisfaction is in the air at the present time, and it is the complementary drawback to a desire for happiness ; but it forms also a most serious drawback to that divine progress which persists beneath the rising and falling of endless civilisations. For in the world as at present constituted it is manifestly impossible for all men, or even any very large number of men, to obtain material satisfaction.

For this reason philosophers of all ages have considered those most happy who were placed by some accident of circumstance where they could neither gain nor lose. But those who learn to distinguish between happiness and satisfaction are in a better case even than that—for they become independent of circumstance.

Every normal person wants to be happy, of course, and many are taking the right way to obtain it by trying to banish sad thoughts ; the trouble is that they do not always fill the space thus left with happy thoughts, and so there remains a vacuum—a sense of blank emptiness—which either drives them into a ceaseless round of trivial amusement, or into a restless busyness from which they derive no real profit.

It is a great thing to dare to be quiet, and think, and yet not to be afraid of feeling unhappy. And nobody

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can do this who does not keep always in the heart so many happy thoughts that there are always plenty ready to fill any vacant place.

Such thoughts throng round the door of every heart. All that men and women have to do is to welcome them and nourish them with quiet hours. Then they will give a charm to gaiety and not desert the sorrowful, for such thoughts were ever dear companions of the good sorrow ; though there is this danger about the very goodness of good sorrow, that our friends and consciences approve it.

Every one can remember how some mourner has gained comparative cheerfulness through a new grief ; and yet such persons do not cease to sorrow. They only cease to be ‘unhappy’ in the accepted sense of the word, because some sudden shock has broken a habit of introspective melancholy.

It is impossible to destroy sorrow, because that is a part of life ; but I think it is possible to create happiness from the essential elements of misery—and really this is, for nations or individuals, the great achievement.

In this way much of the finest creative work in art and science has been the direct result of an unconscious attempt of some one in adverse circumstances to turn adversity to account—to make of it a stepping-stone instead of a burden. To that extent, suffering has often brought happiness, but suffering as an end never was, and never could be, a part of any true religion ; which is no doubt why Christ always sought

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to illustrate and glorify the power that enables man to rise up through the deepest imaginable tragedy to the very height of that effortless perfection of joy which is called Heaven.

Still it really does seem easier for some people to be happier than others, because, from physical or mental causes they are born with what is known as a happy temperament. But there exists, I think, no normal human being who does not possess within himself the germ from which such a temperament may be developed. For this sunny nature is not an unalterable come-by-chance like blue eyes or a straight nose, but a thing that can be definitely cultivated. Only those who try to get the outward result without going through the inward processes of the spirit will achieve nothing but that mechanical cheerfulness which is, of all mental attitudes, the most exasperatingly futile.

Some sensitive souls are even driven to run away from emotion lest they should be hurt: trying the desperate expedient of seeing how little they can live instead of how much. And this fear accounts for that gradual hardening which may be observed in some fine and generous natures, because people like that unconsciously train themselves *not* to sympathise on account of the pangs they have endured through the acuteness of their sympathy; just as others will train themselves not to love, because they have been loved and been disappointed.

Most people are tempted to do this at one time or

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another in their lives, but¹ it is the coward's way, and I believe a coward can never be really happy.

Courage of soul alone can help men to bear such hurts and take heart again. For indeed happiness comes more from being a friend than from having friends; more from loving than being loved; and often when our affection seems wounded it is only our vanity bleeding.

Anyway, it is happier to be wounded a thousand times than to skulk in a cavern of our own making. To love, and be hurt often, and to love again always—this, I think, is the brave and happy life.

ON GIVING GOODNESS A BAD NAME

THE mediæval writers had an outlet for their feelings which is not enjoyed at the present day, and which I myself greatly envy them. For any author of that period who had a grudge against a person or a principle could sit down, with a sense of doing rather a holy thing, and picture a hell where the enemy was having a terrible time. Thus the human craving of a man for getting his own back was assuaged with no cost and comparatively little trouble, while by the time the writer reached the last word, he saw, with incredible vividness, the object of his aversion receiving the just reward of having killed or betrayed or defrauded his neighbour. And I think that perhaps one reason why we all grow bitter now from a sense of the injustice of life, is just because we can no longer relieve our feelings, in such a comparatively simple manner.

Dante did it, of course, and made the doing a glory; and numberless unknown scribes also were doubtless at that time using their imaginations crudely to the same purpose. But we can no longer follow their example because modern thought forces us to pretend, at any rate, that we are too broad-minded. But if this sort of day-dreaming were still quite Christian, I know what kind of people would have the hottest corner in my conception of hell. It would be those who have helped to give goodness a bad name.

ON GIVING GOODNESS A BAD NAME

Because they have done more to lower the standard of human society than all the murderers and adulterers that ever besmirched the face of earth from the beginning until now.

Just as there are masculine, feminine, and neuter, so there are moral, criminal, and non-moral ; and the non-moral is a hideous perversion of nature. Thus it always seems to me incredible that high-minded, thinking men and women can ever have been gulled by the propaganda of the Spirit of Evil into believing that the non-moral attitude is a help to a high standard in literature. The greatest literary treasure we possess is the authorised version of the Bible, and I am quite sure that the men who translated it were animated—all of them, holy or time-serving—by a most intense perception of the difference between good and evil. And I think further that those who adopt the non-morality attitude are still vitalised by the life infused into us by the past ; they still run on—like a hen after its head has been chopped off.

There are those who write books which could never have been conceived but for the heritage of a sense of right and wrong in the world, and who yet blacken goodness with an air of superiority to those who have been strong enough to withstand the hideous propaganda flooding the world. Those who spread it are not evil in themselves—far from it ; they are only ready to believe any new thing because they think it is new, and they are naturally anxious to prove themselves in the movement.

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But it is so difficult to escape. Even those who hope most that they are not influenced, acknowledge now and then that they have listened unconsciously. For what happens when somebody says to us : "I want you to meet Mrs. So-and-so ; she is such a *good woman*" ? We feel we would rather do anything than go to call upon that lady. Which shows plainly enough that you and I have also, in the deep recesses of our minds, given goodness a bad name. Otherwise we, should feel anxious at almost any cost to make Mrs. So-and-so's acquaintance.

The fact is that we use the word goodness without thinking what we mean by it. Of course it does not mean going to church, or conforming to the standards of the world, or giving alms, or being a good wife and mother. And yet each of these acts may be a *part* of goodness. Where we have gone wrong, I think, is in saying that goodness is bad because a church-goer absconds with his clients' money, or a devoted mother runs away with the gentleman next door. It is that very good in those offenders which has confused our judgment. But they do no more towards giving goodness a bad name than we who will not take the trouble to discriminate.

This depreciation is no new thing, though more prevalent now, I fancy, than at any period known to history ; for our grandfathers began to sneer at those in chimney-pot hats and crinolines who stepped decorously along to church with their offspring on a Sunday morning. Such critics were the victims of

ON GIVING GOODNESS A BAD NAME

muddled thinking, because they could not see that after all real goodness was just as likely to exist in those capable of self-discipline and a respect for the home, as in those who preferred to gratify their own tastes elsewhere. Going to church in a crinoline or pale grey trousers may have been a simple sacrifice to convention and expediency ; but it may equally have been a sacrifice to God.

I cannot help thinking that the unknown individual who invented the phrase about worshipping God in the open air *may* have been an unconscious hypocrite who did not like hurrying off to church immediately after his Sunday breakfast ; and that he would form no mean pendant to the other hypocrite who went to church because it was good for business. Hypocrisy was not confined to those inside the Victorian places of worship. All the same it has to be acknowledged that there is this tremendous responsibility taken on by those who try to lead good lives—they can hurt the human race by helping to give goodness a bad name more effectively than any of their fellows.

How, then, is goodness to be recognised ? There can be no way. The good in me may be on the surface—the good in you may be deep hidden from the world. But one thing is certain—the most awful reflection you or I could have, if it is ever possible to look back on life, would be just the thought that we had given goodness such a bad name that we had prevented some neighbour making friends with it. A cheap sneer may then look worse than the forgery

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of an acquaintance who went to prison. For one hurt the pocket of an employer, while the other hurt the souls of men.

And though education is a splendid thing, it alone will not teach boys and girls how to be good. I have proof that wisdom may come out of a man's heart when he can scarcely read—but it cannot come out of a heart in which goodness is not honoured. The man of whom I am thinking was a poor shepherd who never earned more than eighteen shillings a week, and yet by the time his eldest girl was fourteen he had evolved this homily which he gave to each one of his children as they went out into the world : “ Speak the truth ; say your prayers and wash your neck always before you com'e down in the morning ; and never take so much as a pin that doesn't belong to you.” And I scarcely see that school and college could have enabled him to better what his reverence for goodness had taught him as he went about minding his sheep.

The plain truth is that we condone the most bitter and vindictive intolerance from a desire to appear tolerant, and run to prove that badness is not as bad as it seems, by pointing out that goodness is not so good as it looks!

ON COMING TO ONESELF

I AM not pretending that an experience I had this morning is in the least uncommon, but only want to put it into words so that I may not lose it as I have done those thousands of others about which I have said to myself : " Now I shall remember this all my life. It will be lovely to think of some day when I am tired and out of heart."

What I did was to walk down a short street where they let lodgings, cross a road, and down a path to the sands. My head was buzzing with the ordinary cares, joys, and preoccupations of an ordinary woman's morning ; nothing, in fact, would possibly be more ordinary than the whole affair so far.

The weather was fine, with only a little mist in a summer air—but that is not unknown at the end of June, even on the east coast of Yorkshire. The expanse of sand was almost untrodden, because no resident walks on the shore in the morning, and the trippers and visitors were still shy of coming to the seaside after the bitter cold of the last few weeks. At first I walked on seeing nothing ; completely taken up by what was happening within myself. Why had I done so and so ? Why had I left the other thing undone ? How terribly dear good bacon was ! Would that article I had just unfinished writing seem absolutely futile when read over in cold blood ?

But as I went on and the little town began to recede—I *felt* it grow more distant, though I never

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looked round and did not think about it—the buzzing within me must have died down a little, although I was not conscious of any lifting in my preoccupation, because at this point I first noticed that the mist lay still and blue on the cliffs at the end of the bay.

But it was another five minutes or so before I heard the fresh sound of the little waves on the hard sand. Then I looked out to sea, and there was a deep green patch in the midst of pale water that shone grey, like old silver. Calm ! Calm ! A seagull flew overhead and I looked up. Black against a pearly sky. I walked on, still not knowing. A lark rose from a tuftip field on the cliff-top, and the clear freshness of its song trilled through the deep accompaniment of the sea. I stood there, listening ; but when I moved on again because I had to be in for the midday meal, I did not yet know what had happened. Only gradually as I walked I became aware of a quietness within me. The frets and joys were there all the same, but they had quite ceased to buzz in my head. I could hear my soul speak. I had come to myself.

It is so wonderful—the lovely calm and sunshine of that mood which never lasts very long, and can never be described excepting to those who know already. Most often experienced, I think, by the over-sensitive who are hurt, and jarred by what was never meant to affect a single, normal human being ; and I sometimes like to fancy they have this extra joy given to them to make up.

AN OLD-FASHIONED PARSON

EVERY one knows the mysterious way in which certain trifling incidents make the most vivid pictures on the mind, while others of far more importance remain plain facts in the history of our lives, not illustrated at all. We do not understand why this is, nor the system on which those other long-forgotten scenes are sometimes flashed like a picture on a screen, in bright and glowing colours, without context—as if the accidental pressure of some spring had released them. But we begin to think that perhaps everything we have seen is thus stored away, and could be brought out if we knew how to do it.

This is one of many such pictures in my mind. A sunny morning, a dappled blue sky overhead, and a tall figure in a grey suit and a top hat coming towards me between hawthorn hedges. I am a little awed by his fine, clear-cut features, by the immaculate bow of his white tie which marks him out as ‘the parson,’ so I hurry on, afraid lest he may begin to talk to me. And yet I knew he used to love my mother when she also was a little girl and lived in that village.

He was, indeed, as much a part of the life of the place as the blacksmith’s shop to which he went every morning of his life to fetch the letters, and there is no doubt that he regarded this morning visit to the smithy as a part of his daily work.

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He was deeply concerned to know how Farmer Black's oats had threshed out, because he was aware that another bad year might do for Black ; he smiled at the news of pretty Molly Armstrong having made up her mind at last ; he listened appreciatively to the great joke about that Johnny Know-All of a Jim Bates and the painted pig.

A bachelor of good family, he held a living so poor that he had never asked the girl he loved to share it, and now he was quite fixed in his ways, with a woman to come in by the day, and a rather crusty man in the house. He ate the plainest food, exactly like the people round him, and was wont to say, on the rare occasions when he visited his great friends in London, that he preferred cold boiled bacon and home-made bread to all the kickshaws in France.

But with all his simplicity and friendliness, he never forgot, nor tried to make any one else forget, that he was the parson. He was quite free from that attitude of many earnest, devout clergymen of the present day, who seem to be saying all the time : “ Now, *do* remember I am a human being like yourselves ; try, *please*, to forget that I am a clergyman.” The old Rector would no more have thought of asking the young fellows of the village to forget that he was a parson than he could have imagined himself suggesting to them that they should try to forget he had a nose. Each was as truly a part of him as the other, and as little needed talking about either way.

Still he was never professional. He never said :

AN OLD-FASHIONED PARSON

"Yais! Yais!" and looked abstractedly up the street when a woman told him of her son's good fortune, or of her daughter's marriage, for he was one with his people. Perhaps, also, he had a mind at leisure to be thus interested, because he was not hurrying from matins to a meeting, with all of the machinery of a well-run parish going round in his head.

I think, however, that the great secret of his influence was the reality of his own faith in God. I do not know—because he never talked of his personal dealings with his Creator—but I think it was after he had helped to marry the woman he loved to somebody else, and settled down to his loneliness, that he little by little managed to establish that intercourse with the Unseen which is a thing that can never be explained, but only experienced.

I imagine he first felt, then, that Response which does not come always at the time of prayer, but which inevitably will come to those who wait for it. He *knew*—which is such an entirely different thing from *feeling sure* about the Unseen. And his certainty spread around him like an aura, though he would have objected as strongly to the term in connection with himself as to the mention of his under-garments in mixed company.

He was poor, but not with the grinding poverty which destroys humour. He had begun life before the exquisite zest which the habit of a shepherd of souls may give to the low buffooneries of the pro-

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fessional comedian had been fully appreciated by those who cater for the public amusement, and he had not to fight against the preconceived idea that a young clergyman must be a cross between an imbecile and a knave. So it is unfair to place him beside those of our own day who must spend their talents and energy and strength in subconsciously fighting this fallacy.

But the last thing the old Rector thought of was to make religion popular. He held, with the great army of saints, prophets, and martyrs, that the way up can never be made such easy walking as the way down, and he told his flock this with such plainness that they sometimes looked round—being Yorkshire men and women—for a tabernacle where they could get their salvation on easier terms.

Some of them compromised, going to the parish church in the morning, and then enjoying the warm good-fellowship of the Methodist chapel at night; but that made no difference either to the Rector's regard for them as part of his flock, or to their dependence on his shrewd advice and steady sympathy when they were in trouble.

When he first began to live alone, a maiden aunt had given him a book on various ailments and the appropriate remedy for each. It was a dangerous volume, as the villagers occasionally found. But it possessed the fascination which the sporting chance always has for North-country folk, and the more uncomfortable patients felt after taking the remedies

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therein advised—which were made up gratis by the Rector—the more they were pleased.

The doctor lived in the next village, and remained on the most friendly terms with the only neighbour who cared to talk about books, but he used every now and then to threaten dire penalties of the law if this amateur treatment did not cease. “Don’t ask me to be a witness on your side when you are had up for manslaughter,” he would say, shaking a red forefinger, “because I’ve warned you, times out of count, and I shall tell ‘em so.”

However, nobody did die. But sometimes hearty fellows would come to the queer little dark room smelling of linseed and paregoric; where he kept his book and his drugs, and would feign some slight illness in order to get the fine fruit out of his garden, or the shilling, or the setting of eggs from his prize birds, which he would bestow on a favoured patient.

As a pendant to this picture of the old-fashioned parson, and equally glowing with the fresh, bright colours which belong to that early part of memory’s gallery, is my recollection of the parish clerk. It is a day in high summer, he standing by a clump of double sunflowers that blaze at the corner of the ivy-covered church; and the thing I chiefly note about him is the extraordinary make and size of his brown corduroy trousers. They seem to invest him with such an awful dignity in my eyes that I want to run away, instead of answering his civil inquiries about my mother.

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He was a terror to the children who played in the churchyard, but neither he nor the Rector could control the behaviour of the bigger lads at church, who waited until the service was about to start and then sat all together under the gallery.

One evening—it was a Sunday after Trinity, with a smell of roses and ripe corn coming in at the open door—I watched the church grow darker and darker as the Rector went on preaching. There was only one candle lighted near the pulpit desk, throwing a grotesque shadow of his hair and surplice on the wall behind, and this was so like what both the farm-boys and I imagined the '*owd lad*' to be—horns and winged cloak all complete—that I watched it for some time with a sort of fascinated horror—knowing it not to be, and yet—*could* it? At last I heard a whispering andittering from the long pew under the gallery. A scratching sound followed—a flash of light; and the Rector, leaning over the pulpit towards the dusky aisles, said in a deep voice: “John, I smell brimstone!”

Everybody gave a start, then a sigh of relief; and John (the parish clerk) marched down the church to confiscate the box of cheap lucifer matches to which the preacher had alluded.

But the Rector was perhaps at his best when marrying some girl whom he had christened and known all her life, and once, in this queer detached fashion common to children, I watched him perform this ceremony. It was lovely—with the flowers and the

AN OLD-FASHIONED PARSON

pretty dresses, and everybody so excited—but I did not realise until a long time afterwards how his look and voice and grave smile seemed to bestow a sort of crown upon the bride ; as if he saluted in her the woman who bore him, and the one he had loved, and all the others who had passed down life with suffering through the ages.

It saddened him so when any one died that he had not much to say, and was apt to stand with a lump in his throat wringing the hand of the one left behind, and not offering much spiritual consolation. But people at the point of death as well as the mourners always wanted him, for, without speaking of it, he somehow made them share his certainty.

At last came a day when he was taken ill in the pulpit, and he had to see that his time for work was over. It went against his principles to stay on in the village where he had spent forty-seven years when he ceased to earn his stipend, so he retired to a little house in the nearest market-town. But God was good to him after his labours, and the following March, four days before Easter, he died.

WHAT
I HAVE
GATHERED
J. E.
BUCKROSE

